HOLY MOUNT:
Identity, Place, Religion, and Narrative at New Lebanon Shaker Village
1759-1861

by
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ABSTRACT

While the Shakers are associated in North American with simplicity and communalism, an examination of Shaker history reveals a dynamic and complex society. Shaker life was structured by a powerful metanarrative: the Shakers were the ‘Chosen People of God,’ who lived in ‘His Promised Land.’ This narrative, which is profoundly geographical due to its intertwining of people with place, was not static in its interpretation. Nevertheless, it served as the basis for the discourses concerning the most appropriate means to live in the World, but not be of it. Few geographers have examined religiosity and spirituality systematically. This research highlights the interaction between religiosity, identity, place, and narrative as an essential element of the human condition. Religiosity is expressed through narratives and rituals and buttresses a sense of identity and belonging in place. Particular expressions of the Shaker covenantal narrative were shaped by the places in which the Shakers existed. This work examines the Shaker experience at New Lebanon Shaker Village (New York) focusing on the antebellum period. It examines the context in which the Shakers existed, the shifts in the interpretations of the Shaker covenantal narratives, and the means by which the Shaker leadership disseminated their ideas.
For Matthew Emile:

“I must study politics and war that my sons may have the liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. My sons ought to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural science, naval architecture, navigation, commerce, and agriculture, in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry, and porcelain.”

John Adams. May 12, 1780
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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errors or omissions are of my own accord.

Marcus Réginald Létourneau

May 2009
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**NOTE ON MANUSCRIPT MATERIAL:**

All quotations within this document are presented with the original spelling and grammar. The use of *sic* has been minimal.
Today, religious beliefs have often become associated with the violent excesses and the social conservatism of religious fundamentalists making it too easy to associate religion with intolerance, ignorance, and simple-minded acceptance.¹ Such an approach to religion negates its profound influence on the contemporary world.² As Lester writes, “contemporary theories of social and political behavior tend to be almost willfully blind to the constantly evolving role of religion in global affairs.”³ To this, one could add civic affairs. Religion, be it spiritual or civic, is a necessary part of any ‘imagined community’.⁴ For many, the narratives of religion, which serve to guide and structure life, assist in making sense of the world as a whole and one’s own place within it.⁵ For example, within the United States, the Puritan notion of America as “a city upon a hill,” a place of God’s divine blessing, continues to find expression (for better or worse) through the belief of some that America has a duty to lead and enlighten the rest of the world.⁶ While religious ideas, especially when exploited by fundamentalists, have resulted in some of the worst excesses in human history, such as the Crusades, anti-Semitism, and extreme forms of censorship, religious beliefs have also been responsible


for providing peace, comfort, hope and salvation to many. Art, music, architecture, and political philosophy are but a few of the disciplines indebted to the influence of religious ideas.

While the academic study of religion by geographers is viewed by some scholars as a weak and divided field (discussed more in Chapter Two), religion is fundamental not only to understanding the concept of how people make sense of their world but also to understanding many past and contemporary social events. The relationship of place and identity, as elucidated by Malpas, offers an opportunity to understand this complex interplay between self, community, identity, and place. Malpas argues that place must be considered integral to the possibility and structure of human experience. Drawing upon the works of Heidegger, he argues that people are inseparable from the places that they inhabit and demonstrates that humans are intimately related to their surroundings. The examination of religion is one application of Malpas’ ideas to contemporary and past geographical topics. Jenkins argues that Christianity is at a cusp, “one that is as epochal for the Christian world as the original reformation.” With the current rejection of existing models of Christian belief, Christians are turning to alternative models. Indeed, as Jenkins notes, with the declining importance of the nation-state, Christianity, and religion in general, may offer alternative narratives for self-identity. However, Christianity, even in the ‘faithful nation’ of the United States, is sometimes poorly understood. As

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7 Malpas, 1999.
8 Ibid, 32.
9 Jenkins, 2002, 53.
10 Ibid, 67.
McKibben notes, 12% of Americans believe that Joan of Arc was Noah’s wife.\footnote{McKibben, 2005, 32.} In the United States, where 85% of the population identifies itself as Christian, many have rejected the communal aspects of Christian belief for a more individualistic understanding of Christianity.\footnote{As a comparison, in Israel, only 77% percent of the population identifies itself as Jewish.} However, some communities have attempted to live a life dedicated to the service of God based on the Gospel model of cooperation and love.

This work focuses on one such group; the United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing, more commonly called ‘The Shakers.’ With a history of more than 245 years of change, growth, and decline – in the process producing a rich body of manuscript material – the Shakers offer a rare opportunity to examine the changing fortunes of a single group. However, the ideas in this work resonate beyond the Shakers.

Sectarianism, in general, has been an important aspect of the American experience. As Marini writes, sectarianism has contributed significantly to the development of all communities within the United States, particularly as expressed through the growth of religious pluralism, the experience of American religious revivals, and because of its association with the American frontier experience.\footnote{Marini, 2001, 153.} It represents an important, albeit poorly understood, aspect of the history of the United States.\footnote{As Lester notes, what is dismissed at a particular time as “a fundamentalist sect, a fantastic cult, or a mushy New Age fad could become the next big thing.”} Many
Christians, especially anti-Semitic Christians, forget that Christianity itself was once considered a Jewish sect. The study of new religions and sectarianism is now understood as a serious academic topic. Such works seek to examine how new movements arise, what internal dynamics are at work, how they develop, how broader society reacts to them, and how they move toward the mainstream.\(^{16}\) Studying the Shakers offers a unique opportunity to explore the development of one such group within the United States and how this religious community’s ideas were expressed spatially.

The Shakers are arguably the most successful of all utopian Christian groups.\(^{17}\) Their influence is more pervasive than as an aesthetic folk art movement and furniture style, as they are commonly perceived. The Shakers served as a model of successful communalism for both a number of religious and secular groups as well as intellectuals, including Friedrich Engels who studied the Shakers at Pleasant Hill Kentucky and New Lebanon.\(^{18}\) The Shakers were also visited by leaders of other socialist and utopian communities such as Robert Owen and Rebecca Cox, and the Shakers themselves corresponded with other communities such as the Perfectionists at Oneida and the Koreshan Unity. Thus, the Shakers must be understood not as a religious community that developed in isolation, but as a dynamic community that changed throughout its history and engaged widely with the outside world. It was the ability of Shakers to accept that their religion was, and would continue to be, changed by the spiritual gifts of God that

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\(^{16}\) Lester, 2002, 38.

\(^{17}\) Utopian in this context is based upon Thomas More’s original meaning; it is a society built and maintained by humans. While God may be present, agency is still required to facilitate a particular vision. Thomas More. *Utopia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

has allowed them to survive where other communities intent on maintaining dogma and ritual have collapsed. Understanding the process of negotiation between differing narratives is one of the most powerful aspects of the Shaker story. One could misunderstand the Shakers as religious automatons, bound merely by ritual and blind faith. But the Shakers are much more complex and, like any other community, consist of a multiplicity of individuals with all of their quirks, foibles, and particular visions of how Shakerism should look, feel, and be experienced. Yet, individual Shakers, as a collective whole, served to create and maintain a dynamic and enduring community. Ultimately, the aim of this study is to understand how narratives of places contributed to this process, thereby providing a model for further study of not only the Shakers, but also other forms of community.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

When the last of the Shakers is buried historians with renewed vigor will evaluate their contributions, recalling that they left behind something more important than furniture.¹

The Shakers have become a byword in North American society for simplicity in design, devotion to God, and communalism. However, the history of the Shakers reveals a complexity often forgotten. The name ‘Shaker’ was meant to be derisive; in the antebellum period, the Shakers called themselves ‘The United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing.’² ‘Shaker’ was a bastardization of the name ‘Shaking Quaker,’ a mocking moniker bestowed upon them in England that combined a description of their worship with the mistaken assumption that they were a schismatic branch of the Quaker church.³ Early in the antebellum period, the Shakers recognized that they needed a public and unifying self-narrative. In the 1810 edition of the Testimony of Christ’s Second Appearing, often erroneously called the Shaker Bible, the Shaker perspective on this matter is readily apparent:

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³The Shakers, keenly aware of the need to protect their own image, would later expropriate the word ‘Shaker’.
Many have undertaken to write and publish concerning the principles and practice of a people, who, in derision, are called Shakers, and either through ignorance or prejudice have misrepresented both: so that no true information, from this quarter, could be obtained by those who desired it: hence many have become solicitous of having, from the people themselves, a correct statement of their faith. It is, therefore, in answer to the long-repeated requests of the unprejudiced and candid part of mankind that the following sheets have been prepared for the press.4

When this passage was originally written, Shaker principles and beliefs had been distorted by alternative, often apostate, narratives. Even today, the existence of a powerful yet simplistic and erroneous narrative constructed by a scholar/antique dealer and his wife continues to hamper scholarly attempts to comprehend this important religious community.5 Understanding the various narratives about the Shakers, including narratives of place, is fundamental to understanding the Shakers themselves. As Shakerism was, and continues to be, a dynamic faith, these competing narratives shaped both Shaker communities and individual Shakers.6 These were augmented by external narratives from the broader social places in which the Shakers found themselves.

Central to understanding the rise of the Shaker faith is one village: New Lebanon Shaker Village.7 As home to the Ministry, a group of two elders and two eldresses who

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4Seth Y Wells. The Testimony of Christ’s Second Appearing. 2nd Ed. Albany: United Society of Christ’s Second Appearing, 1810.
5The work of the Dr. and Mrs. Andrews will be discussed later in this chapter.
6Even today, the Shakers are still shaped by the narratives of scholars, the antique industry, and the surviving Shaker community at Sabbathday Lake, Maine.
7New Lebanon Shaker Village was also known as ‘The Shaker Village’ (by the World’s People), Holy Mount (during the Period of Spiritualism known as Mother Ann’s work) and Mount Lebanon (from 1861 when a Post Office was established at the community) to distinguish it from the neighbouring towns of New Lebanon, West Lebanon, Lebanon Center, and Lebanon Springs. This nomenclature is complicated further because of the Shaker tradition of separating their villages into ‘Families’ (to be discussed later). At New Lebanon Shaker Village, the village was divided as follows: East Family, North Family, Church Family, Center Family, South Family, Upper Canaan Family, and Lower Canaan Family. Unless otherwise stated, New Lebanon will refer to the Shaker Village.
served as the head of the ‘Church of Christ on Earth,’ New Lebanon was the ‘Mother Church’ for all other Shaker communities. While the Shakers saw all villages and Shakers as equal, New Lebanon was the village to which other Shaker villages deferred. At its apex, it was home to approximately 600 members, contained 100 structures, and covered 6,000 acres of land. This was part of a larger community which consisted, at its maximum, of more than 3,500 Believers, 22 villages, and numerous out families spread over 1,000 miles of the United States (figure 1-1). It was also a place where the competition between various narratives had far reaching consequences. The village developed within a particular socio-spatial context that influenced the development of New Lebanon and all of Shakerism. Nevertheless, before one can start to understand the Shakers as they were, it is important to understand how they are understood by contemporary society and scholars.

“Origins”

‘Shaker Studies’ has been overshadowed by the works of two people: Dr. Edward Deming Andrews and Faith Andrews. Contemporary understanding of the Shakers is in

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8 As Calvin Green and Seth Y Wells, two of the most prominent Shaker thinkers of the Antebellum period, would write, all Shaker villages were “branches of the one Church of Christ.” Calvin Green and Seth Y Wells. A Summary of the Millennial Church or United Society of Believers, (commonly called Shakers.) Albany: Printed by Packard and Van Benthuyten, 1823: 68.
Figure 1-1: Shaker Settlement in the United States (1787-Present) Author’s Image.
no small part the product of their pioneering efforts in the 1930s and 1940s. However, the Andrews’ numerous works focused upon the Shakers and their works as the expression of an isolated folk-art aesthetic, in the process constructing a powerful and pervasive narrative of the Shakers. As Howard and Grant have noted, the Andrews were not merely scholars:

If the Andrews’ scholarship remains to this day crucial to the world of the Shakers – and their work, more than merely a cornerstone, constitutes the entire foundation of Shaker studies – then in the same breath it must be acknowledged that the Andrews were also antique dealers in search of a product and opportunities to market it. Their motives for studying the Shakers, as scholarly as they were, were by today’s standards, at least, deeply compromised by their commercial mission.  

The Andrews’ narrative was not overly complex. Their emphasis was on the Shaker material aesthetic, portraying them as simple isolationists who rejected their contemporary world while living in a highly structured austere environment. Yet their idea of simplicity is also said to have informed modern twentieth century design. This narrative about the Shakers set aside the more human and historical aspects of the Shaker way of life. It neglected the dynamic and changing nature of Shaker communities. Twentieth-century Shakers have critiqued the Andrews as not adequately understanding, or seeking to understand, their communities and way of life. What motivated the Andrews is perhaps clearest in their own words:

12 As quoted in Howard and Grant, 2002-2003, 13.
Brother Ferdinand was one of the last male members of the Church family at Mount Lebanon. His retiring room was in the basement of a large brick dwelling, a well-lighted room looking out over an orchard and the hills to the south. When we knew him, he was well along in years, infirm and long past productive labor. Most of his time was spent in this room, though we sometimes came across him taking a short walk, moving slowly along with the aid of a Shaker cane.

One day we paid him a visit. What we talked about is now forgotten, but the memory of our first sight of the stand beside his bed is still distinct. It was the only piece of Shaker-made furniture in the room. There was nothing on the stand, no book, no pipe, no glass of water. It seemed to have no use.

However, on inquiring further if it could be purchased, we were informed it was “Ferdinand’s stand,” that it was his favorite piece and that it did have a use - he placed his watch on it at night! And to make sure it remained at his bedside one foot was screwed to the floor.

That was that. It did no good to suggest another stand, a new one perhaps, be substituted for the one we coveted. Ferdinand would sorely miss the one he has used for over fifty years. We would have to wait.

After some seven or eight years Brother Ferdinand no longer had need to put his watch on the stand at night. And when he was no longer in time, the sisters kept their promise to let us have what time had withheld so long.14

The meaning of the faith, the nature of Shaker social relations, and the places and the context of Shaker lives were all subordinated to material acquisition in the Andrew’s understanding of Shakerism.

The Andrews’ use of photography served to further promote and maintain their narrative of simplicity and order. As Schwartz and Ryan demonstrate, photography, with its ability to replicate an object or landscape through optics and chemistry, was seen to offer eighteenth and nineteenth century modernists more ‘truthful’ representations.15

Photographs are key in the process of constructing powerful and pervasive narratives about particular places. In the nineteenth century, as today, photography was not only the tool of empirical scientists, but also that of government officials and the scions of business. Photography was widely used to construct particular, and often deliberate, senses of places that were amalgams of ‘reality’ and ‘fantasy.’ The Andrews’ particular use of photography suggests some understanding of the power of photographic images. In particular, William F. Winter’s photography in their 1937 book, *Shaker Furniture*, focused on individual items placed in unadorned, yet concocted environments.\(^\text{16}\) As Stein suggests, a closer look at three of the images (figure 1-2, figure 1-3, and figure 1-4) reveals that they were photographed in the same room, each constructed to represent the Andrews’ interpretation of the look of a Shaker room.\(^\text{17}\) As the Andrews themselves wrote, “though the placement of objects followed the ordinary rules of pictorial technique, every effort was made to evoke the spirit of the original scene, as we imagined it to be . . .”\(^\text{18}\) Interestingly, though, while the Andrews’ acknowledged that they had a particular narrative in mind when they constructed their life-size dioramas, they also thanked Winter for creating a ‘truthful interpretation’ of the Shaker aesthetic.\(^\text{19}\) These images still shape how the Shakers and their places are understood. It is only in more recent scholarship by Brewer, Stein, Wilkins, Koomler, and Howard and Grant, that the


\(^{17}\)Stein, 1992, 376.

\(^{18}\)Andrews and Andrews, 1937 [1964], 64b.

\(^{19}\)Ibid.
Figure 1-2: “Dining Room” Andrews and Andrews, 1937 [1964]: Plate 3.

Figure 1-3: “Sitting Room.” Andrews and Andrews, 1937 [1964]” Place 15.

Figure 1-4: “Infirmary.” Andrews and Andrews, 1938 [1964]: Plate 39.
Shaker narrative as constructed by the Andrews has been critically reexamined. Nevertheless, the Andrews’ work must be recognized for its role in bringing attention to the Shakers. As Howard and Grant note, “[t]hey introduced the World to the world of Shaker; fixed in the gaze of their Pioneer Scholars, the Shakers became worthy of being remembered, recorded, and celebrated.”

Shaker places were neither as neat nor as tidy, either figuratively or literally, as the Andrews’ narrative might suggest. Several photographers such as Stephen Guion Williams and Ann Chwatsky have captured a very different sense of place. Williams’ image of Sister Mildred Barker’s bedroom door, with her collection of assorted knickknacks and pictures, demonstrates individuality within a Shaker community. Williams’ work shows not only the material products of the Shakers, but the Shakers themselves. In part, his images helped to show Shakerism as a living religion whose adherents were human beings (figure 1-4). Williams’ images are accentuated by the work of Chwatsky. Chwatsky was the photographer for Wertkin’s work on the Shakers, and like Williams, she sought to portray the more human aspects of Shaker life. Chwatsky’s image of Brother Ted [Theodore Johnson] and Brother Arnold [Hadd] at work clearly illustrates that Shaker places were not always orderly; they were dynamic and vibrant, and could even be messy (figure 1-5). These photographic images are corroborated by

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Figure 1-5: “Sister Mildred’s Door.” Williams, 1975: Plate 23.

Figure 1-6: “Brother Ted and Arnold at Work.” Wertkin, 1986: 136.
textual representations of Shaker places in use. Manuscript material reveals the more
temporal aspects of Shaker life. A text written by one Shaker Eldress laments the
unkempt nature of the younger Shaker sisters under her care:

It is considered a very improper and immodest thing for sisters to hang
their under garments in any room[,] hall, cellar or corner in the kitchen,
(dark room not excepted) neither is it proper to hang them on the railing[,] up garret nor in any halls in the house; but our rooms and closets are the
proper places for such garments. And it is desired that this thing be
remember by all. Neither should we leave any of our clothes hanging or
lieing [sic] in the lower hall or meeting room: nor leave them out of doors
over night.23

Such written comments only reinforce that the Shaker communities were composed
individuals with all their inherent strengths and weaknesses.

**Shakerism as a Way of Life**

It is quite alluring to remember the Shakers through their material culture, yet
Shakerism is more than a ‘religion of wood.’ Shaker life was a life dedicated to God and
an attempt to live, as much as possible, in the Spirit of Christ. Shakerism is a dynamic
belief system that has survived for more than two hundred years through sustained
commitment built upon a meta-narrative of the community’s covenantal relationship to
God. It has continued to grow and develop, shaped both by the spirit of God and the
creativity of its adherents. Indeed, the Shakers have been shaped by many narratives,
including narratives of place, both internal and external to their communities. The
Shakers were far from simple isolationists and religious automatons. Their communities
were populated by complex human beings, many of whom had their own vision of

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Shakerism and its places. New Lebanon, as home to the senior Shaker leadership, played an important role in determining how Shakerism was expressed and understood not only by other Shaker communities, but also by the ‘World’s People.’ New Lebanon served as both a model and a nexus. The debates that occurred there around how best to live a life dedicated to God, articulated through disparate narratives of place, had repercussions throughout all Shaker communities and even among the ‘World’s People.’ Of particular interest are the debates in the antebellum period. The debates of this period reflect the challenges facing the Shaker leadership as New Lebanon grew from its nascence to climax, and how Shakers embraced the World.

While often associated with the Amish and the Mennonites, the Shakers should not be confused with these groups, despite any similarities between them. Notably, in all of these communities, the individual is less important than the community, there is an emphasis placed on simplicity, and there are deliberate efforts to separate the community from the influence of the profaning outside world. However, theologically and in terms of their appearance Shaker communities differ significantly from the others. The Shakers did not and do not eschew technology, and unlike the family-oriented Anabaptists, they are celibate. In addition, the Shakers understand God as both male and female.

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24 The ‘World’s People’ were how the Shakers referred to non-Shakers.


26 Family in this context is understood to be blood relations. For the Shakers, the spiritual/communal family was paramount.

27 As Brother Theodore Johnson writes, “The Shaker emphasis on God’s dual nature was never intended to convey anything but the fact that God being pure spirit was possessed within the terms of our human power of discernment of the male characteristics of strength and power and of female characteristics
Shakerism is a spiritualist religion. The spirit world is a real and tangible place which provides guidance and instruction for daily life. The idea of the Christ Spirit, in particular, marked the Shakers as different from other Christian communities. Christ was not understood as an individual, but as an anointed spirit who would enter into all who would accept it. As Green and Wells wrote, “Christ, the anointed of God, is a Spirit, and can only be seen and known in the Spirit.” 28 According to this view, Jesus was not divine, but was the first manifestation of the Spirit in an individual. Mother Ann was the first manifestation of Christ in a woman, and the Spirit’s second appearing. It was this second appearing which marked the millennium foretold in the Christian Bible and denoted the renewed Kingdom of God on Earth. It is also from this event that the Shakers derived their formal name: Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing. As Whitson writes, “[Mother] Ann inaugurated the consciousness of the parousia as the first one among many to be drawn into the experience of Christ alive and fully present in-through-with us all.” 29 This experience required a new way of living and an effort to manifest the Christ Spirit in all aspects of daily life. Individual Shakers interacted with the Christ Spirit in three ways: the indwelling of the Christ Spirit in an individual; by building up the communities in which they found themselves spiritually so as to sustain the Christ Spirit for not only themselves but also for others; and by showing the manifestation of the Christ Spirit to the world at large by serving as an example of how to live in the Christ of compassion and mercy.” (Life in the Christ Spirit. Sabbathday Lake: United Society, 1969: 6).

28 Green and Wells, 1823, 207.

Spirit.  

The efforts of both Shaker individuals and Shaker communities to live in the Christ Spirit resulted in a dynamic faith. This was, in part, because competing interpretations emerged concerning how best to live in the Christ Spirit, and how the Shaker Village, as a part of God’s Kingdom on Earth, should not only look but also be experienced. As Johnson writes, “... it is not the teaching [about the Christ Spirit] in itself that has constituted the uniqueness and greatness of Shakerism, but the way in which that teaching has through the daily activity of men and women expressed itself as a way of life, a way of life that shaped a community, and was consonant with community by its very nature.” Implicit within this statement is the idea that Shaker lives and communities evolved through continued spiritual revelation. Shakerism, Shaker communities and the narratives that structured these communities, must be understood as continually evolving. Indeed, this dynamic nature, which reflected continued revelations from the spirit world, was considered, and still is considered, central to Shakerism as a vibrant faith. To use Armstrong’s words, Shakerism is about orthopraxy (right practice) more than orthodoxy (right belief). In his preface to the 1813 Millennial Praises, Seth Wells clearly articulates this dynamism as a central precept for Shakerism:

30Johnson, 1969, 4 -5.  
31Ibid, 3.  
32Revelation, for the Shakers, was understood to be both direct (one person who receives a message from God) and indirect (when one finds the messages of God in the world around them.) Michael Taylor. “Shaker Practical Principles and Their Justification. The Shaker Quarterly. Vol. 19. No. 2. (1991): 38.  
It is not expected that the people of God will ever be confined, in their mode of worship, to any particular set of hymns, or to any other regular system of words -- for words are but the signs of our ideas, and of course, must vary as the ideas increase with the increasing work of God.³⁴

Key in this passage is the idea that textual documents are temporally, even spatially, contingent, and as their meaning within society and within the community change, can become passé, misunderstood, and even irrelevant. What is also implicit is the notion that as these ideas change, alternative narratives will develop. As Johnson would note, Shaker life and teachings are always in a state of tension and change.³⁵

“The Narrow Path to Zion”

The spiritual and socioeconomic health of Shaker communities depended on external support and interaction. In particular, celibacy meant that new converts were essential to the survival of the Church as children were not born into the community.³⁶

The Shakers recognized that complete separation of their places from the influence of a profane world, although sometimes considered desirable and sometimes not, was impossible. Sister Mildred Barker, a twentieth century Shaker leader, captured the essence of the sought after relationship between Believers and the World’s People:

³⁵Johnson, 1969, 3.
³⁶A notable exception was Calvin Green, whose mother converted when she was pregnant.
Certainly no one can separate himself or herself from the world. The world is around us; it impinges upon us from every side. We cannot be apart from the world. There is, however, One who has told us that we are to be in the world, but not of it. The fulfillment of the admonition is the constant yet difficult quest of Believers.37

The Shakers generally have paid attention to the changing world around them and engaged outside groups in dialogue. Meeting houses integrated seating for the ‘World’s People’ to allow them to observe the Shakers during their personal religious experiences and prayers. Early depictions of Shaker meeting houses often show the ‘World’s People’ watching the Shakers at worship. Even today non-Shakers often attend the Shaker services at the surviving Shaker community at Sabbathday Lake in Maine.

The communal experience of the Shakers must also be understood as the deliberate effort of individual Shakers to integrate themselves into places shaped by the Christ spirit and the spirit world. Shakers drew upon the spirit world for both guidance and support, and it was the spirit world that provided the foundation for the practical considerations of everyday life.38 As White and Taylor state, Shaker life was not a life dedicated to communal living, it was a life dedicated to spirituality.39 For the antebellum Shakers, living in a Shaker village provided the means by which an individual could access the Spirit world and receive guidance. As Brother William Leonard wrote, there existed a spirit world and a natural (material) world, and a Shaker life could provide

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There is a natural and a spiritual world, and a natural and spiritual body; yet those in the one cannot with the exercise of their own proper senses, perceive those in the other. Spirit cannot see matter, nor can matter see Spirit. . . . It is therefore an unchangeable law, that a union between intelligences in these two spheres can only occur by those in the natural sphere becoming abstracted from earthly things, and their spiritual senses being developed.

Suggested within this passage is the importance of the Shaker village and its role as a place to connect to the spirit world. Also implicit within this statement is the importance of segregation: the Shaker village was a place where one could become abstracted from earthly things. Thus, the Shaker village was seen by Shakers to occupy a liminal place; it existed in the natural (material) world, but had an intimate connection with the spirit world.

**Research Questions and Outline**

Shaker Life was structured by a powerful metanarrative: the Shakers were the Chosen People of God who lived in His Promised Land. This narrative, which is profoundly geographical due to its intertwining of people with place, was not static in its interpretation. It served as the basis for the discourses concerning the most appropriate means to live in the World, while not being of it. Particular expressions of this narrative were shaped by the places in and through which the Shakers existed. A religion and its narratives are situated in time, space, and movement.

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40 Brother William Leonard was an Elder within the Harvard (Mass) Bishopric.
Tweed argues that this analysis can be extended to the theoretical works of scholars themselves. An interpretation by scholars is also situated. Tweed, 2006, 17-18.

Statement concerning Shakers engagement with the World, the core question that remains is “How did the Shakers live in the World, but not be of it?” From this question, there are several further questions that can contribute to this understanding:

- How did the Shakers understand their covenant and what impact did it have on their places?
- How did the Shakers engage with the World’s People?
- How did the World’s People understand the Shakers?
- How was Shaker belief manifested in built form and disseminated among their numerous villages?
- How did Shaker narratives of place change over the antebellum period?

These questions form the basis of this work which located the analysis of Shaker life in its context as context is critical to the construction of narratives and their interpretation, and any analysis must locate Shaker life in its context.43

Secondary questions that emerge from this work include:

- How can the Shakers help geographers better understand the geography of religion and spirituality?
- What can the Shakers reveal about utopian and planned communities?
- How can this analysis help to further an understanding of the relationship between place, identity, and narrative?

To understand these questions and their relationship with place, the idea of place itself must be scrutinized. The continued reliance upon the works of Mircea Eliade and his notion of sacred and profane space by geographers studying spirituality is problematic. Indeed, the over-reliance on the use of Newtonian notions of space and place is also an obstacle. This work will explore these questions through an alternative approach to space and place, based upon the ideas of place, identity, and narrative. To facilitate this

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43 Tweed argues that this analysis can be extended to the theoretical works of scholars themselves. An interpretation by scholars is also situated. Tweed, 2006, 17-18.
discussion, I discuss the Shakers, their context in which they originated and developed. I will then examine the covenantal narrative and how its creates a particular spatial relationship with God. In the process, I will demonstrate that a broader theological idea of place informed how many people, not just the Shakers, understood the world, and sought to live within it. Shaker life, in particular, was defined by a specific world view and notably the belief that a Shaker life was a life dedicated to God. I will then review how particular expressions of the Shaker covenantal narrative were expressed throughout the antebellum period, focusing on how the Shakers articulated their particular visions of enacting and protecting God’s Zion on Earth and how the Shakers engaged the World’s People. These ideas will also be explored in the context of Shaker built forms and landscapes, which evolved over the antebellum period. Lastly, I will consider how the New Lebanon leadership disseminated these narratives to other communities.
CHAPTER TWO
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
PLACE, IDENTITY, RELIGION, AND NARRATIVE

While there is a strong relationship between place, identity, religion, and narrative, geographers studying the places created by religious communities have generally sought to separate the sacred from the profane. These attempts frequently result in analyses that not only fail to contextualize place, narrative, and identity, but also suggest that these places are static and open to a limited number of interpretations. Narratives shape both place and identity while place itself can form narrative and identity. Thus, understanding a community’s narratives is essential to reading its places and understanding its identity. Similarly an understanding of a community’s places is necessary to comprehend its narratives and identity. And to complete this triad, identity cannot be explored without attention to both narrative and place. Utopian religious communities provide fertile ground for geographical analysis because these communities emphasize the creation of new places – such as new forms of community organization and design – as well as a new identity for adherents. Often couched in terms of a divinely received and fixed geography, these ideas about space and place are ever-changing. Like all communities, utopian communities evolve throughout their existence. Further, always implicit in the construction of these communal places are narratives derived from experiences of the world. Indeed, utopias are both a reaction to and a product of a particular modernity. Narratives are accessible through narrative and spatial analysis. The power of narrative analysis lies in the recognition that meaning does not necessarily
This discussion has produced the following delineations: ‘religious geography’ refers to a type of geosophy, focusing on the religion’s role in shaping human perception such as J. Gay’s The Geography of Religion in England (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1971); ‘geography of religion’ refers to the study of religion’s social, cultural, and environmental effects, such as Pierre Deffontaines’s Geographie et religions (Paris: Gallimard, 1948); ‘ecclesiastical geography’, originating in the sixteenth century, refers primarily to the efforts to map the spatial advance of Christianity throughout the world, such as in R.P.O. Werener’s Atlas des Missions Catholiques (Lyon: Bureaux des Missions Catholiques, 1886); ‘biblical geography’ refers to the efforts to identify places and names in the Bible and determine precise locations such as William McClure Thomson’s The Land and the Book (London, Nelson, 1864.); physicotheology is exemplified by C. Glacken’s Traces on the Rhodian Shore (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), which argues that through nature God’s wisdom can be found; and environmental determinism suggested that theological beliefs developed as a direct result of the physical conditions in which they were located; see Ellen Semple’s Influences of geographic environment (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1911). For additional discussion on these divisions, see Lily Kong. “Geography and religion: trends and prospects.” Progress in Human Geography. Vol. 14 (1990): 356-357; and Roger Stump. “Geography of Religion – Introduction.” Journal of Cultural Geography. Vol. 7 (1986): 1.

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religion. At issue is this school’s treatment of religion as a superorganic entity.³

Arguably, the Saurian tradition has provided valuable insight into the ways in which particular groups construct and reinforce religious principles in place. It was also influential in understanding internal worlds and landscapes. For example, scholars such as Isaac and Gay have demonstrated how early Greek texts reflect this dynamic interaction between religion and geography.⁴ Other works, such as those by Park, Sopher, and Meinig have illustrated the relationship between religious ideals and geography through studies of religious distribution patterns, group imposition of religious ideals upon the physical landscape, and the analysis of sacred place and pilgrimage in particular cultures.⁵ Research into historical landscapes has revealed the importance of grounding geographical research in material structures and understanding the governing ideas that shaped landscapes.⁶ In particular, the recognition that a landscape may be shaped by an authoritative ideology through the use of symbols and signs is a valuable contribution to the understanding of how place is made meaningful to people. Nevertheless, these landscape-focused approaches have tended to neglect context, diversity, and human agency as landscapes carry as many meanings as there are narratives and identities.

³Kong, 1990.


attached to them.\footnote{These landscape-focused approaches have been criticized by Kong, 1990, 366-367; Baker, 1992, 7-8; and Ruth Kark. “Sweden and the Holy Land: pietistic and communal settlement.” \textit{Journal of Historical Geography.} Vol. 22 No. 1 (1996): 47.}

Within many geographical forays into religion and spirituality, the efforts to define sacred place and related concepts continue to rely upon the problematic works of Eliade and his topology of sacred and profane.\footnote{Mircea Eliade. \textit{The Sacred and the Profane: the nature of religion.} New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company. 1987.} While a substantive criticism has yet to be leveled from within the discipline of geography, Eliade’s ideas have been widely critiqued within religious studies and philosophy.\footnote{Among the closest to a geographical critique of Eliade is J. Z. Smith’s \textit{To Take Place}. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.) Smith uses a variety of humanistic geographic writings to problematize Eliade’s ideas of place.} These criticisms have revealed several key problems with Eliade’s work. In particular, his dialectic of sacred and profane neglects the complexity associated with the construction of place.\footnote{Bryan Rennie. “Introduction.”B. Rennie (Ed.) \textit{Changing religious worlds: The Meaning and End of Mircea Eliade}. 2001 <<http://www.westminster.edu/staff/brennie/eliade/introduction.htm.>>Accessed May 4, 2003.} Eliade treats the ‘sacred’ as an unproblematic category while neglecting the role of modern myth and popular narrative in the development of sacredness. He also totalizes humanity as \textit{homo religiosus}. While claiming that ‘primitive’ man – exemplified by diverse groups from Africa, Asia, and the Americas – retains the characteristics of \textit{homo religiosus}, he simultaneously argues that vestiges of \textit{homo religiosus} can be found within the actions of ‘modern’ man. Ultimately, he argues that all humans are creatures that necessarily desire an intimate connection with the divine. He argues that this connection is achieved by the incursion of sacred power upon the earth’s surface, which creates sacred spaces. Such an approach presupposes a religious view of society and neglects not only human agency,
but also human diversity. Symptomatic of his totalizing approach is his grouping together of distinct peoples, including Asians, Africans, and ‘primitive’ peoples. As Murphy queries, “[i]n what universe do these people belong together? . . . only in the universe of essential consciousness; only in the universe of a universalist subjectivity.” This sentiment is echoed by Brown who states that the generalizations Eliade employs fail to meet rigorous scrutiny because Eliade’s interpretative topology, and the subsequent imposition of that topology upon all of the human species, is based upon the analysis of a few select societies. Even Eliade’s concepts of sacred space and time are questionable. For Eliade, the human attachment to particular places and dates is a consequence of archaic vestiges of the sacred and the profane. This gives undue importance to past geographies and does not recognize the ongoing constructed nature of meaning. As the work of Malpas and Ricoeur reveal, the importance that people ascribe to particular places and times is a function of biography, memory, constructed narratives and personal experience.

Nevertheless, geographical perspectives on religious and spiritual issues have the potential for tremendous vitality and rigour. To address these criticisms and problems, geographers are exploring religious issues through the rubric of ‘new cultural geography.’ Current research has begun to consider the contextual nature of religion, the multiplicity of narratives within a single society, and contestations and conflicts between

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competing groups. Kong argues that this refocusing of geographical studies through ‘new cultural geography’ addresses some of the criticisms leveled against geographical analyses of religion and spirituality. In additional to working within the realm of cultural geography -- the traditional domain of geographical works on religion and spirituality -- contemporary studies are exploring themes of religion and spirituality within social, historical, economic, and political frameworks. Among the best examples of this new form of research is Stump’s analysis of religious fundamentalism. Stump argues that fundamentalism must be understood by examining specific social, political, and cultural geographies. Another example is Berry’s economic analysis of utopian communities which demonstrates that geographical studies of religion cannot be limited to cultural geography. Even Harvey’s landmark study of Sacré-Coeur – most often referred to within discussions of nationalism and political geography – suggests that religious issues must be understood as something more than a delimitable sub-element of culture. Religion, he suggests, is often profoundly political. There are also works outside geography, in disciplines such as classics, theology, religious studies, anthropology, and sociology, that explore the relationship between geography and religion. For example, Visser demonstrates that churches embody a variety of narratives at different scales, Lane explores the mystery and meaning of place within American

14 Kong, 1990, 363.

15 Religionswissenschaftler is defined by Kong as one who as been trained in the study of religion. Kong, 1990, 368.


spirituality from a theological perspective, and Schrauwers examines the role of the Sharon Temple in enshrining community belief. However, despite the work of Lane, Kong, Schrauwers, and Stump, the attention to the interplay between place, identity, narrative, and religion is still slight and there has been little interest in personal religious experiences, folk religions, or new religions. This project will focus on the last of these three – new religions. New religious movements, often described as a reaction to modernity, often construct their group narratives as critiques of greater social ills such as poverty, loose morals, materialism and industrialization. However, these narratives, which are integral to both group and individual identity, are dependent upon experiences within particular places and times.

**Identity, Place, and Narrative**

Understanding human identity requires attention to spatial strategies. Bachelard argues that self-awareness is realized through the places in which human beings live and that these places, in turn, shape and influence human memories, feelings, and thoughts. In

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essence, these places facilitate human imagination and knowledge. He explores this idea through his work on ‘home’ and poetics.\textsuperscript{22} The idea of the house serves as an important symbol for Bachelard as a place of personally nested cosmoses and, in literature it is as important as character and plot. It is also through an understanding of place that human beings come to understand not only themselves but also how to relate to others.\textsuperscript{23} In the words of Buttimer, “people have not only intellectual, imaginary, and symbolic concepts of place, but also personal and social associations with place-based networks of interaction and affiliation.”\textsuperscript{24} This sentiment is echoed by Kibreab who argues that place is a repository of social rights and membership, both of which are important in defining social position and identity.\textsuperscript{25} Place is also a nexus for the intersection of competing narratives that remake and remould the place itself.\textsuperscript{26} As Massey suggests, place is the junction for the continuous interaction of ideas and interpretations that influence human identity. These interactions, in turn, change the nature of place itself. Thus, place can never be considered static or ‘finished.’\textsuperscript{27}

Many analyses of place have failed to problematize ‘place’ or have used it

\textsuperscript{23}Malpas, 1999, 13.
inconsistently. Place is commonly understood following the notion of place expounded by Newton and other physicists as a segment of physical space tied to a specific locality. Many scholars in humanistic geography, such as Tuan, are still trapped in this mode of thinking. While arguing that humans imbue place with meaning, these scholars neglect the influence that the resultant place has upon those who experience it. Put otherwise, they neglect the dynamic interaction between place and identity. This neglect results in the construction of place as secondary to space and leads to a circular and tautological construction of both concepts. Malpas attempts to address this issue by reconceptualizing place. He argues that if place is to be regarded as a powerful philosophical concept, it must be considered integral to the possibility and structure of experience. Drawing upon the works of Heidegger, Malpas argues that people are inseparable from the places that they inhabit; in advancing Heidegger’s concept of “being-in-the-world,” he demonstrates the impossibility of treating human beings as contingently related to their surroundings. The structure of human existence, which Heidegger calls Dasein, is intimately linked to place as individuals often experience place before (or indeed without) fully comprehending the place itself. While places can be endowed with subjective meaning, it is upon place that subjectivity is founded:

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30Malpas, 1999, 32.
There is no doubt that the ordering of a particular place – and the specific way in which a society orders space and time – is not independent of social ordering. . . . However, this does not legitimate the claim that place, space, or time, are merely social constructions. Indeed, the social does not exist prior to place – and through spatialised temporalised ordering – and so cannot be that out of which, or solely by means of which, place is ‘constructed’. It is within the structure of place that the very possibility of the social arises.31

This is significant as it implies an entirely different structure to the topology of place than that of Newtonian space. Rather than employ an x-y-z coordinate system, a place-based system is one in which places are defined and located through human experience. It is through its nested character that a place opens out into sets of other places wherein a connection to one place entails a connection to a larger set of places.32 The implication, Malpas argues, of such a ‘topographic’ mode of thought is that knowledge, thought, experience, and identity must be understood through their interconnections in and through place rather than through their simplification.33

Identity is the product of the simultaneous construction and reconstruction of self-narratives and autobiographies, including narratives of place. A narrative can be understood as a ‘story’ that orders and structures both time and place, making individual and group action comprehensible.34 In the words of Wallace,

32Ibid, 105.
33Ibid, 40.
Everyone needs a story to live by to make sense of the pastiche of one’s life. Without a narrative a person’s life is merely a random sequence of unrelated events: birth and death are inscrutable, temporality is a terror and a burden, and suffering and loss remain mute and unintelligible.35

These ideas are paralleled by Hardy who writes, “we dream in narrative, day-dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative.”36 Identity is constructed from many narratives, and these multiple narratives profoundly affect how people view the world. Identity must be understood as being constructed by the amalgam of actions and attitudes that are themselves understood in terms of their interrelationships with other objects and persons in the world. However, while human agency and imagination are integral to determining what is included in a particular narrative, individual narratives are deeply shaped by community narratives. As Malpas states, the structure of the mind and mental content cannot easily be separated from the structure of the world in which the subject is located.37

The inseparability of these internal and external worlds is crucial to understanding narrative. As Niebuhr suggests, how narrative is understood depends upon one’s temporal context: “From the point of view of historical beings, we can speak only about

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37Malpas, 1999, 100.
that which is also in our time and which is seen through the medium of our history."38 Narratives serve to structure ‘history’, giving ‘time’ its form and order.39 This time, which Niebuhr calls ‘internal time,’ is social and dynamic. A sense of the past and a sense of possible futures are fused in the present to organize both individuals and communities.40 To have a sense of one’s past, in relation to the narratives of one’s embodied actions within particular places, objects, and persons, is to have a sense of one’s present and future. It is important to note, though, that many narratives of the past are necessarily constructed at the group level. Community narratives, in particular, can serve as structures that order and reorder places in ways that can establish and constrain the actions of the individuals who inhabit them.41 This is particularly the case with belief systems that are greater than empirical demonstration (such as religion and nationalism) that require narratives to maintain group cohesion.42 Derrida argues that nationalism, like religion, depends on a faith that is beyond reason and proof.43 As a nation or a religion ‘grows,’ it often loses sight of its multiple origins, simplifying or even forgetting selected historical experiences. At a certain point what develops is a need for national or religious narratives. Both religious and nationalist groups use historical narratives to create an


40 Niebuhr, 1989, 34.

41 Malpas, 1999, 186.


‘imagined community’ with which people can identify and use to distinguish themselves from others.44 An external viewer, separated from this sense of internal time, may have difficulty understanding an individual’s or a community’s sense of identity and history. Niebuhr’s line of thought is focused on time but it can be extended to place. Similarly, Crites argues that all forms of cultural expression bear the imprint of both time and space.45 The subjectivity of human identity is dependent upon the subject’s engagement with the surrounding environment, a world of multiple subjects and objects.46 It is also through an engagement in and with social groups and membership in social groups that identity is, in part, derived.47 This engagement occurs at a variety of scales with varying degrees of intensity.48 One group may imbue place with an ‘official’ narrative, alternative narratives contest and even reject it. These competing narratives shape place. While a place can be deliberately constructed with a sanctioned narrative, the inherent openness of place allows other competing narratives to emerge, including different narratives of identity.

These contextualized and often competing narratives serve to structure religious communities, and are evident within a variety of different media, including written texts and rituals. As Niebuhr notes, the structuring role of narrative is an important element in


the Christian faith:

Obedience to moral imperatives, worship, and prayer are indispensable and inescapable in the Christian Church; they are inseparable from listening to God’s word. . . . Religious and moral experience are always in some history and in some social setting that derives from the past. They offer us no way of avoiding the use of our history in saying what we mean.49

This point is reiterated later in his work when he argues that texts and rituals, with their inherent narratives, are fundamental to survival of a community:

What the neural system is to the memory of an individual self, books and monuments are to a common memory. Without the Bible and the rites of the institutional church the inner history of the Christian community could not continue, however impossible it is to identify the memory of the community with the documents.50

Written texts and rituals are not static, and this dynamism has important implications for identity. Ricoeur argues that there is a reciprocity between the texts and the identity of a community; the ways in which a community reads and interprets its texts has a profound impact on how the group’s identity is constructed.51 Alternative readings and interpretations of canonical texts can result in conflicts that change and threaten the identity of a religious community.

Religion, as a dynamic creation, evolves in relation to the context in which it

50Ibid, 44. However, it should be noted that this is a Eurocentric understanding as there are many societies with very sophisticated traditions but which have neither monuments nor books.
exists, but is not merely a product of other forces.52 It is a ‘sacroscope’:

They are not fixed, built environments – as the allusion to landscape in the term might imply – although religions do transform the built environment. . . . Whatever else religions do, they move across time and space. They are not static. And they have effects. They leave traces. They leave trails.53

In particular, religions provide orientating tropes, such as narratives, that serve as tools for the making and remaking of real and imagined worlds.54 Such tropes are reinforced through the creation of material culture and through ritual.55 Tweed draws upon two ideas to understand religiosity: dwelling and crossing. He write that, “religious women and men make meaning and negotiate power as they appeal to contested historical traditions of storytelling, object making, and ritual performance in order to make homes (dwelling) and cross boundaries (crossing).”56 Religions operate in and through place by enforcing specific spatial codes.57 Particularly, four chronotopes (the body, the home, the homeland, and the cosmos) spatially and temporally orient religious adherents.58 Ultimately, “religions not only map the contours of the terrestrial, subterranean and celestial realms; they also orient devotees temporally and spatially by creating cosmogonies and teleographies that represent the origin and destiny of the universe.”59

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52Tweed, 2006, 60.
54Ibid, 68
55Ibid.
56Tweed, 74. See also Godlewska, 2005
57Tweed, 74.
58Ibid, 97.
Ritual is important to the relationship between identity and narrative. While the relationship between identity and narrative has been thoroughly examined by social psychologists and anthropologists, the importance of place has often been neglected. A notable exception to this pattern is Goheen’s analysis of parades in Victorian Toronto. In his work, Goheen clearly demonstrates that ritual is very important to the claiming of symbolic places, and by extension, to identity. It is through ritualized acts that places, notably spiritual and monumental places, are inscribed with an intruded narrative. Ritual communicates particular ontological and ideological narratives, as well as the pragmatic regulations which govern a group. It also serves to reinforce who does, or does not, belong within the group and its places. These places then serve as focal points for community action. As Hamblet notes, experiences of persecution, powerlessness, and victimization can result in the creation of places used for the establishment of self-identity and to redefine both internal and external relationships:

Where people feel helpless and threatened, detached and morally confused, [the construction of home and home-space] may take on a distinctive structure. It may become an obsessive project that regulates or suppresses differences in the interest of a stable and integrated identity. It may seek to purify its ‘sacred’ domain by rejecting alien ‘contaminants’.

The idea of home and homespace thus becomes an important part of this process of

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60 Hamblet, 2004. Hamblet provides a very thorough examination of research on this topic.
63 Ibid, 5. Hamblet defines home-craft as the crafting on oneself into a location through the application of ideal ‘virtues’. Hamblet, 2004, 47.
identity construction and maintenance. However, the idea of home, especially that of a communal ‘home,’ is paradoxical. While places of the home are sites of refuge and protection, they are also sites of restriction and sometimes of violence. Within communal settings, there are clear boundaries of within/without that are often augmented by rituals designed to articulate particular narratives. These rituals serve to configure a community’s places by demonstrating ‘acceptable’ behaviour, and by exhibiting the rewards of such behaviour:

There will be secret codified greetings, special music, emotionally-charged testimonial rites, confessional and other purgative ceremonies, punitive procedures (often systematized, sometimes self-inflicted) and programs of reward for the faithful (often in a transcendental gift system). . . . Religious belief more or less explicitly encourages pathologies of defense and hysterias for cleanliness from the polluting elements of a “fallen” world.

While the focus of Hamblet’s project is on the extreme application of this process of identity construction, particularly the use of violence to ensure hegemony, her analysis is still applicable to other identity-construction projects. If one accepts that the construction of group identity requires, in some way, the subjugation of the self to a greater community, and accepts the existence of a relationship between identity and place, the question becomes how do places contribute to the construction of group identity.

Utopia and Religious Communities

The utopian communities of ‘New Religious Movements’ provide an opportunity to examine this relationship between place, narrative, and identity. New religious

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65 Ibid, 93.
communities often attempt to create a new time, such as the millennial Kingdom of God, through the construction of an ideal spatialised community. These communities also face the challenge of creating new narratives of identity. Thus, the new places these communities create are used for the cultivation and protection of their theological and social narratives, especially when the outside world is perceived as hostile to their new religious beliefs. However, despite the deliberate effort on the part of these groups to ‘break’ from the world, the places that they create are inevitably the product of the modernity in which they exist. Religiosity, even reclusive religiosity, is deeply contextual and can only be understood with careful attention to the broader social movements and reactions of which it is a part. No matter how spiritual the inspiration for segregation, the people who inhabit a segregated space cannot escape modernity and the outside world.

Modernity can be understood as a cluster of dominant social values that embody a dramatic shift to new ways of living in and comprehending the world. In the early twenty-first century, modernity in the western world has become associated with rationality, secularization, and capitalism as well as greater self-exploration and self-realization, including spontaneous expression and the gratification of creative and carnal


urges.\textsuperscript{70} But each age and society comprehends modernity differently. Ogborn argues that modernity is best understood as the experience of living in worlds organized and transformed by social values that in turn shape how temporality, spatiality, and historical consciousness are experienced.\textsuperscript{71} These social values do not affect people in a universal way; the experience of modernity is contextual and is fragmented based on distinctions such as ‘race’, gender, class, and religion.\textsuperscript{72} These consciousnesses are constantly being reshaped by the challenges of the future and the legacy of the past.\textsuperscript{73} An example of this reshaping of religious awareness can be seen in the reaction of fundamentalist Protestant groups against what they view as problematic ‘modern’ social mores such as women’s equality and the separation of church and state. Despite their reaction to these issues, these groups are the product of modernity themselves. It is the individualism associated with modernity that inspired, and in some cases permitted, many of these groups to adopt a literal or conservative reading of the Bible. Religious traditions express a rootedness in a network of social relations and institutions that are themselves products of modernity.\textsuperscript{74} As Maalouf states, religion bears marks of both time and place.\textsuperscript{75} Indeed, modernity must be understood as affecting all people in some way:

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\textsuperscript{72} Gaonkar, 2001: 1; Ogborn, 1998, 14.


\textsuperscript{74} Williams, 2002, 329.

\textsuperscript{75} Amin Maalouf. In the Name of Identity. Toronto: Penguin Books Canada, 2003: 64.
\end{flushright}
[Modernity] has to be understood as transforming the intimate geographies of everyday life and animating grand transformations on a national or global scale at the same time, bringing different spatialities and temporalities together in previously unlikely juxtapositions. Doing so emphasises the multiplicities of modernities and shows that they are shaped by context in more than just the ways in which local particularities deflect universal processes in different directions.76

In reaction to the social values associated with modernity, some utopian groups have sought to return to a pre-modern ‘Paradise Lost.’77 ‘Modern’ communities often unconsciously seek stability and inspiration from the past.78 For these groups, modernity creates an era of seemingly perpetual disintegration and change, including a questioning of accepted religious beliefs. Nietzsche, in the 1880s, argued that modernity had many possibilities for the individual but was without communal values and history; it was the “death of God.”79 Modernity can be seen as trivializing and even destroying traditional social bonds:

Old ties are broken down. At the same time, city dwelling is transformed by the immense concentrations of populations of the modern metropolis. By its very nature, this involves much more impersonal and casual contact, in place of the more intense, face-to-face relations of earlier times.80

This belief was especially prevalent during what McLoughlin terms the ‘Great

77 Berman, 1988, 15.
79 As quoted in Berman, 1988, 21.
Utopias appear to offer a dual defence for those disoriented or displaced by modernity. These communities could simultaneously provide morals and guidelines and allow their members to withdraw to a place perceived as outside modern society.

Utopias represent “humankind’s deepest yearnings, noblest dreams, and highest aspirations come to fulfillment, where all physical, social, and spiritual forces work together, in harmony, to permit the attainment of everything people find necessary and desirable.”

The word utopia was coined by Thomas More as the title for his classic sixteenth century work. Meaning both ‘good place’ (eu-topia) and ‘no-place’ (u-topia), it is a deliberate pun and one often used since by utopian scholars. An exercise in thought, speech, and topography, Utopia was conceived in the summer of 1515 and published at Louvain in 1516. Its effect was profound, spurring the development of a number of social-political works that promoted their own particular vision of the utopian ideal. Today, the word ‘utopia’ is used in disparate ways. Manuel and Manuel argue that there are two types of utopia: “theoretical utopistics” (utopian literature and political philosophy) and “applied utopistics” (the foundation of community and other experiments aimed at producing an ideal society). Porter and Lukerman divide ‘applied utopistics’ into those that look backwards to a rural Eden, reject technology, centrality,

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81 In his work, McLoughlin divides the Great Awakenings into five distinct periods: the Puritan Awakening; the First Great Awakening (1730-60); the Second Great Awakening (1800-1830); the Third Great Awakening (1890-1920); and the Fourth Great Awakening (1960 to present). William McLoughlin. Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.


and planning on the one hand; and on the other, “New Jerusalems,” cities of the future
that are planned, ordered, technologically advanced, engineered, bounded, and
centralized. However, in practice, many utopian communities combined ‘Edenic’
features such as rural village settlement with ‘forward-looking’ notions about technology
and social order. Geographers have sought to explore these utopian ideas in a variety of
ways including: the relationship between millennialism and utopia, examining the ideas
of utopia and dystopia, and analyzing utopianism and the urban form. Spatiality has
always been an integral part of utopian projects, even when the topographical details are
left to the reader’s imagination. Utopian ideals are an effort to bring order to a disordered
world and, with the increased interest in issues of space and place in geography, are more
topical than ever.

There are generally three major stimuli for the establishment of utopian
communities: politico-economic, psycho-social, and Biblical. With the rise of the
Industrial Revolution and the resultant poverty and environmental destruction, many
groups hoped self-sufficient communities might combat labour inequality, rapid
urbanization, and environmental degradation. These aspirations were reflected in the

85See for example J. Powell. “Utopia, Millennium and the Co-operative Ideal: A Behavioural Matrix
“Sweden and the Holy Land: pietistic and communal settlement.” Journal of Historical Geography.
87Kanter, 1972; Kraushaar, 1980: 5-6. It should be noted that these three motivations are closely
plaited together; a single group may draw on all three.
critical writings of Rousseau, Saint Simon, and Karl Marx, and motivated a reconsideration of issues of equality, industry, and brotherhood.\textsuperscript{88} The psycho-social motivation for the establishment of utopian communities, can be seen as a reaction to modernity. The prevailing society is seen as repressive, resulting in dehumanized, depersonalized, and unnatural lives.\textsuperscript{89} Communal utopias are places in which people can begin anew. The utopian community itself is an effort to create a ‘New World’ through the creation of a new social and physical environment in which the barriers to human development and social intimacy are removed.\textsuperscript{90} The Christian Bible has been the inspiration for numerous communities. In Europe, many new communities were founded on an alternative to the Catholic interpretation of the Bible. For groups such as the Mennonites and Moravians who found themselves victimized for their beliefs, America appeared a refuge from persecution, war, and poverty.

Utopian communities in the United States, both religious and secular in origin, are intimately connected to the biblical tradition of millennialism with its emphasis on the future Kingdom of God and its vision of a new heaven and earth.\textsuperscript{91} Millennial beliefs are an integral aspect of many forms of human religiosity.\textsuperscript{92} The idea of the millennium is a profound expression of hope for the attainment of permanent well-being and salvation.

\textsuperscript{88}Kraushaar, 1980, 6.
\textsuperscript{89}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{90}Ibid.
Within the Christian tradition, millennial beliefs are intimately tied to Chapter 20, Verse 7-8 in the Book of Revelation. Here, Satan is cast into a bottomless pit for one thousand years following which he was to be released upon the world:

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle; the number of whom is as the sand to the sea.

The world and humankind enter a period of great evil, filled with false prophets, death, and destruction. For some, the chaotic changes associated with modernity, such as social instability and restructuring, are symptomatic of the end-time. Yet, within The Book of Revelation, there is a promise of a celestial utopian kingdom into which only a chosen few will enter:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

While the millennium in John’s revelation was a period of one thousand years, the term ‘millennium’ in religious studies now more commonly refers to a perfect age or salvation.

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by God’s Kingdom. In preparation for the millennium and/or due to a belief in its immediacy, people will radically change their lives and associations. While Powell argues that millennial groups, with their expectation and preparation for imminent salvation, are distinct from utopian groups, the distinction seems arbitrary. Human agency, which More demonstrates is an integral part of any utopian project, is also an integral part of a millennialist project. While a divine presence is considered integral to many millennialist communities, the establishment, development, and survival of these communities generally depend on human effort; failure is considered the result of poor faith and/or behaviour. While spiritual influence, often expressed in terms of divine revelations, instructions, and visits, is important, the integration and implementation of spiritual ideals are left to established leaders or designated members. This human ability to effect change and progress made More’s project markedly different from the ecclesiastical visions that predated his. Even today, human agency continues to denote millennialist projects as utopian. As Tarlow notes, belief in the perfectability and the basic goodness of humanity characterizes utopian projects.

Important to the symbolism of the millennial kingdom is the Garden of Eden. The Garden of Eden evokes powerful images of a lush garden tended by God, a link between the divine and terrestrial. In the words of Lecoq and Schaer,

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96 Wessinger, 2000b, 7.

97 Powell, 1971.

The terrestrial paradise [symbolizes] a *locus amoenus*, a place full of charm, a temperate climate, an eternal spring full of flavors and scents. It is planted with trees that simultaneously bear flowers and fruit, which in iconography often constitute the only décor in paradise. It is a dream of self-sufficiency delivered from the tyranny of material needs. . . . To the sylvan charms of paradise is added living water, the fountain flowing in its midst.99

Descriptions of paradise within the Books of Isaiah and Ezekiel reinforced and refined the geographical description of paradise within Genesis.100 In Ezekiel’s vision of the restored temple, a new river flows from the temple, producing a new paradise.101 In this new paradise, “by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed.”102 This place of respite and plenty, away from sin and chaos of the world, became a powerful symbol that was, and is, often appropriated by individuals seeking to create new religious communities.

The idea that paradise was a place of protection was also exemplified by the re-conceptualization of Eden as an urban place. During the Twelfth Century, the protection and civility of the earthly paradise was represented by the city and the citadel.103 However, the concept of Eden as a garden was not discarded. In fact, American millennialist utopias represent a fusion between urban and rural forms of Eden. America,
as symbolic of the *New World*, became a metaphor for the Garden of Eden, a place unsullied by the corruption and sins of the Old World, its monarchies, its established churches, and its nobility. These utopias also combined social order and self-sufficiency, communal living exemplifying civility and protection apart from the material needs and desires of a profane existence.

The ideas of the millennium and millennialist thought are fundamental to the Shaker experience. As Guimond notes, while the term ‘millennialist’ is typically applied to any group expecting the creation of a new heaven and earth, millennialist groups are more accurately defined as those that interpret the concept figuratively, including the Shakers: “Thus, for the Millennial believer [a Shaker] the cataclysmic changes described in Revelation are internalized and allegorized; they are experienced as the individual’s inner awakening or spiritual resurrection which gives him a radically new perception of heaven and earth – and a radically new way of living in the world.”

For the Shakers, the millennium occurred in 1770 when Mother Ann started her ministry: “[T]he Second Coming of the Christ Spirit began when it was manifested in the life of Mother Ann, and it has been further manifested in the lives of other believers who have been ‘gathered’ into the communal life of the Millennial Church.”

The Shakers did not accept a literal interpretation of Revelation, instead placing emphasis on the action of the individual, notably the individual’s acceptance of the Christ Spirit, and the decision to live within a community defined by service to God. As Guimond demonstrates, the founding of a

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105 Ibid, 103.
Shaker community was an important millennial event. It was within the created community that Believers would find peace, harmony, and the absence of sin, thus creating the possibility of spiritual perfection through direct human actions, notably through the choice of living in harmony with the Christ spirit. However, the ideas about Shaker community and Shaker places were not static; they changed in response to competing narratives, both internal and external, that arose in Shaker communities. These narratives are accessible to us through narrative analysis.

**Narratives of Place and Narrative Analysis**

Narratives of place are an integral part of Shaker texts. They illustrate rationale for separation and the ideal physical form of their communities. The narratives outline the failings of the modern world and explain the need to withdraw from it. They also set the tone for the community’s interaction with the world and the degree to which interaction should be permitted or is necessary.

Narrative analysis is an interpretative analytical technique that examines the narratives or ‘stories’ employed to make sense of the world. In particular, macrotextual analysis sees the texts as a fora for symbolic action; texts serve to frame a context, define it, give it positive or negative meanings, and mobilize responses to that context. Texts are understood as often ideological artifacts that codify and control meanings and outline

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106 Guimond, 1988, 103.


how to interpret narratives.\textsuperscript{109} The researcher’s challenge is to illuminate the structures employed by groups and individuals to organize and structure disparate and sometimes contradictory narratives. The strength of narrative analysis is its implicit criticism of the privileging of formal logic: “[S]cholars are asked to recognize that people use a more informal rationality in telling stories, so scholars should use a ‘narrative rationality’ in order to understand communication.”\textsuperscript{110} In this study, narrative analysis will help to illuminate the justifications and ‘truths’ understood and propagated by these groups to their members and to the outside world. The rationale for their actions often is not easily understood outside their religious, social, political, and textual context. While narrative analysis has been criticized as unrigorous because based on inherently biased narratives that cannot be used to determine a causal relationship, it is a valuable for examining and understanding how people make an often confusing world comprehensible.\textsuperscript{111} Narrative analysis should not be used to demonstrate causal relationships, but to illustrate the contextual nature of information.\textsuperscript{112} It is the inherently contextual nature of a narrative that makes it valuable to understanding groups’ motivations. For this project, the texts of each group will be examined for ideological persuasion and sentimental evocation.\textsuperscript{113}

Narratologists, such as Hodder, argue that meaning resides both in the text itself,


\textsuperscript{110}W. James Potter. \textit{An Analysis of Thinking and Research about Qualitative Methods}. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1996: 139-140.


\textsuperscript{113}Lincoln, 1989, 9.
and in the reading and writing of texts. Riessman agrees and argues that written texts are created within, in support of or against particular audiences and traditions. A narrative of place cannot be fully understood apart from the temporal and spatial context in which it was created. As previously discussed, while the works of scholars such as Ricoeur emphasize the temporal aspects of narratives, the strength of Malpas’ analysis lies in his recognition that narratives, in particular narratives of identity, have spatialised dimensions. The Shakers and their communities were a product and a response to particular contexts. Within New Lebanon, particular narratives about the present and future were intertwined with accepted religious texts to create a blueprint for an ideal place. However, what had often been neglected within Shaker studies is the recognition that these accepted religious texts were themselves dynamic and changed over time, resulting in different perceptions of Shaker place and identity.

The Inseparability of Narrative, Place, and Identity

Narrative, place, and identity are inseparable; rather than simplifying each of these ideas, a critical geographical analysis focusing on religion and spirituality must address their interrelationship. Indeed, any project which seeks to understand the role of place and identity must, by necessity, address the narratives used in their construction. Similarly, any discussion of narrative and identity must take place into account. Geographers, including geographers of religion, have only begun to explore this dynamic interconnection. Utopian religious communities provide a unique opportunity to examine

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this process of identity construction in and through place as typically they attempt to create a new temporal reality and identity by establishing segregated places. Accessible through narrative analysis, the places created by these communal societies are never value-free; always implicit in their construction are narratives derived from a particular experience of the world. The Shakers relied upon a variety of narratives for constructing both place and identity. Notable among these narratives is one that defined the profound relationship with God experienced by all Shakers. The narrative of a Covenant with God served to shape Shaker places at a variety of scales. How this narrative was understood was informed by the particular social contexts and places in which the Shaker existed, and it is to the contexts of Shakerism that we will now turn.
Shakerism was shaped by the social and religious context of eighteenth century New England which affected how the Shakers developed their narratives and the influence of external narratives.\(^1\) As Davidson writes, “the language and concepts which [people] inherit actually limit and influence their response to the world as much as they reflect it.”\(^2\) Church institutions, and by extension their places, are shaped by the theological ideas and values of the membership and by the spatial context in which that membership exists.\(^3\) Early Shaker history, including the origins of the Shakers, is not well understood. While the Shakers began in England, the movement was transformed in the United States. This can be seen in the development of Shaker Village at New Lebanon, which was shaped by three key factors. First, it was located in a landscape of religious revivals and experimentation. Many of the New England Yankees who converted to Shakerism understood and partook in the religious narratives of New England. New England, in the years preceding the establishment of Shakerism, had undergone significant religious and social change. In particular, understanding the social and religious context of Berkshire and Columbia Counties, in which the New Lebanon Shaker Village was located, is crucial to the history of the Shakers (figure 3-1).\(^4\)

\(^1\)Brewer, 1986, 1.


Figure 3-1: Columbia and Berkshire Counties.
Secondly, the Shaker village at New Lebanon was located in a contested cultural and political borderland. This was a place located between old New England and ‘Dutch’ New York and was claimed by both. Finally, the community that would become New Lebanon Shaker village developed out of pre-existing kin and social networks. Ultimately, the combination of these three attributes made New Lebanon an ideal location for the establishment of Shakerism and had profound implications for the Shaker interrelationship between place, identity, and narrative.

**Shaker Origins**

Early Shaker history is poorly understood. The reasons for this are twofold: the early Shakers eschewed written works and later Shakers attempted to fill this written historical gap by the construction of narratives that were the product of a different context. The uncritical acceptance of Shaker sources by scholars, many of which have been influenced by the Andrews, has resulted in overly sympathetic and romanticized visions of Shakerism.

The Shakers originated in Manchester, England. Eighteenth Century Manchester was a community of approximately 25,000 people (1773) of many different faiths. In addition to Anglicans and Presbyterians, it was home to several evangelical churches,

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6Stein, 1992, 2.
including Baptists, Quakers, Catholics, Methodists, Swedenborgians, various religious mystics such as the Moravians, and even a small Jewish community.\textsuperscript{7} Even among these diverse churches, a 1769 entry in the \textit{Virginia Gazette} noted an unusual religious group.

Our correspondent at Manchester writes a very strange account of a religious sect who have lately made a great noise in that town. They took their rise from a prophet and prophetess who had their religious ceremonies and tenets delivered to them in a vision, some years ago. They hold theirs to be the only true religion, and all others to be false. They meet constantly three times a day, at the house of some one of their society, and converse in their own way about the scriptures, a future state, other sects of religion, &c. until the moving of the spirit comes upon them, which is first perceived by their beginning leisurely to scratch upon their thighs or other parts of their bodies; from that motion becomes gradually quicker, and proceeds to trembling, shaking, and screeching in the most dreadful manner; at the same time their features are not distinguishable by reason of the quick motion of their heads, which strange agitation at last ends in singing and dancing to the pious tunes of Nancy Dawson, Bobbin Joan, Hie thee Jemmy home again, &c. These fits come upon them at certain intervals, and during the impulse of the spirit they disturb the whole neighborhood for some considerable distance, and continue sometimes whole nights in the most shocking distortions and commotions, until their strength is quite exhausted, from which uncommon mode of worship they have obtained the denomination of \textit{Shakers}.\textsuperscript{8}

This religious fervor was not unique to the early English Shakers. These Shakers, more correctly known as members of the Wardley Society after its founders James and Jane


\textsuperscript{8}[Staff] \textit{The Virginia Gazette}, November 9, 1769: 1. This is the earliest recorded mention of the Shakers, who at this point were still in England. The \textit{Virginia Gazette} was published weekly in Williamsburg between 1736 and 1780, and provided news on events in Virginia, other colonies, as well as Great Britain. (The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. \textit{Virginia Gazette}. <<http://research.history.org/DigitialLibrary/BrouseVG.cfm>> Created 2008. Accessed April 14, 2008.) As Wood notes, the use of ‘innocuous foreign news’ was a means for early publishers to avoid controversy and thus remain in the good graces of the ruling authorities. Wood, 2004, 20. (See also About the \textit{Virginia Gazette}. <<http://lewleadbeater.com/va.gazette.htm>> Created 2002. Accessed April 14, 2008.)
Wardley, were called the ‘Shaking Quakers’ because of similarities in some of the religious practices between the Shakers and the Quakers. These similarities included following the direction of spiritual guidance, the access of both sexes to the spiritual world, a sense of impending apocalyptic judgement, and the coming of the millennium as foretold in the Book of Revelations, condemnation of the established religious order, and the undertaking of deliberate disruptive acts during the services of the Church of England. It appears, however, that the Shakers were related to the English Methodists.

Daniel Goodrich, in his 1803 Narrative History of the Church, states unequivocally that the Wardley Society was associated with “the Denomination called Methodists.”

Subsequent research by Brother Theodore [Ted] Johnson and Brother Arnold Hadd, as well as by Rack, seems to substantiate these origins. No reference to the Wardley Society can be found in the detailed Quaker records of the day, and members of the Wardley Society who remained in England subsequently established several Methodist churches.

In either 1759 or 1760, a young woman named Ann Lee came to the Wardley Society in search of spiritual illumination. An illiterate labourer who worked in the textile mills of Manchester, Ann was married to Abraham Standerin, an associate of her father. The union produced four children, all of whom died in infancy. As Koomler

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9Stein, 1992, 5.
10Daniel Goodrich, Sr. Narrative History of the Church. 1803. Manuscript: MPH (no manuscript denotation.)
13Ann Lee, known to the Shakers as Mother Ann, was also known as Ann Lees, Ann Standerin, and Ann Stanley.
suggests, the circumstances of Ann’s early life may have resulted in a craving for greater spiritual fulfillment.\(^\text{14}\) As documents from the Manchester Constabulary and local journals recording her involvement in the disturbance of several Church of England services in Manchester attest, Ann was an enthusiastic member of the Wardley Society, including its rejection of the established order.\(^\text{15}\) During her imprisonment in 1770 for disturbing the Church of England services, Ann had a vision of the Christ Spirit that revealed to her the nature of humanity’s fall and the means of redemption. Brother Theodore Johnson articulates how this experience is understood by members of the Shaker faith:

> In 1770, at Manchester, when Mother experienced in prison, the immediacy of Christ, not as one remote and unapproachable in the vastness of some far off heaven, but rather as one involved wholly in the here and nowness of all human life and activity, her life was profoundly transformed and redirected.\(^\text{16}\)

Her powerful testimony of this experience convinced many members of the Wardley Society that the Christ Spirit existed in the here-and-now and was awaiting all who would accept it. Many members of the Society chose to accept her leadership and the Wardleys themselves proclaimed that they had preparing they way for ‘Ann the Word.’\(^\text{17}\) Ann Lee became known as Mother Ann, the fulfillment of the prophecy of Christ’s return in

\(^{14}\text{Koomler, 2000, 16.}\)


female form. Once released from prison, Mother Ann continued to agitate against the established order. In May 1773, she was apprehended for disturbing the congregation in the ‘Old Church.’ She was arrested again two months later for “going into Christ Church, in this town [Manchester], and there willfully and contempuously in the time of divine service, disturbing the congregation then assembled at morning prayer in the said church . . . .” These acts of civil disobedience were seen as a direct affront to the status quo, and the Shakers were not only subjected to imprisonment, but also to physical threat and violence. Also at this time the members of Mother Ann’s group began to have visions of the New World. These visions included one by James Whittaker, a follower, a cousin and, upon her death, successor to Mother Ann. He was said to have seen a “large tree, every leaf of which shone with such brightness as made appear like a burning torch, representing the Church of Christ which will yet be established in this land [America].” Leaving England for the American Colonies in 1774 was probably also a pragmatic decision to escape the violence directed at them.

The New World was far from the Canaan expected by Mother Ann and her followers. Although the small group arrived in 1774, it was not until 1779 in

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19 This was the town’s centre for the Church of England.
21 As leader of the Shaker community, he was known as Father James.
Nisquenunia, now part of Albany, that the Shakers were able to establish themselves.\textsuperscript{24} Here, at the outbreak of the American Revolution, the Shakers, who were both pacifists and English, were denounced as Tories and loyalists. Members of the community, including Mother Ann, were imprisoned as British spies in 1780, for “daily dissuading the friends of the American cause from taking up Arms in defence of their Liberties.”\textsuperscript{25} While Mother Ann was eventually freed by the intervention of Governor George Clinton who allowed her release upon the posting of a £100 bond, this imprisonment resulted in the loss of the Shakers’ relative isolation, gaining them both new converts and new enemies.\textsuperscript{26}

It was a fortuitous event at Nisquenunia that led to the establishment of a Shaker village in New Lebanon and the first widespread American conversions.\textsuperscript{27} New Lebanon, located approximate 20 miles east of Albany, New York, and seven miles west of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, on the western side of the Taconic Mount Range, had been the site of a ‘New Light’ Baptist revival in 1779 (figure 3-2, figure 3-3). The revival had raised general expectations for the millennium, which failed to materialize. The

\textsuperscript{24}Nisquenunia, also known as Niskeyuna, was later known as Watervliet. This community was transformed into a Shaker Village, with its own meetinghouse, shortly after the communualization of New Lebanon in 1787. It served as a second home to the Shaker Ministry; indeed, the Ministry split most of its time between New Lebanon and Watervliet. It is also the final resting place of many early Shaker leaders include Mother Ann, Father William Lee, and Mother Lucy Wright.


\textsuperscript{26}Stein, 1992, 14; Paltsits, 1909 (1972), 592. There are little details concerning her release and this case, but this would be an interesting point of further study.

\textsuperscript{27}Prior to the conversion of New Light Baptists community members from New Lebanon, only one native born American converted.
Figure 3-2: Relative Location of New Lebanon. Author’s Image

Figure 3-3: New Lebanon’s location relative to Albany. Author’s Image
community was in a state of spiritual flux when word of an ‘elect lady’ who lived north of Albany reached it. A delegation from the community, led by Joseph Meacham who was an elder and lay minister for the New Light Baptists living in the area, traveled to Nisquenunia to meet Mother Ann. Members of the delegation embraced her gospel and, upon returning to New Lebanon, encouraged others to visit Nisquenunia. Community members converted *en masse*, forming the first substantial Shaker community and providing the initial converts for the Shaker village at New Lebanon.

Mother Ann’s remaining years were spent spreading the Shaker gospel. Following the successful conversion of Joseph Meacham and many members of the New Lebanon community, Mother Ann traveled throughout New England between May 1781 and September 1783. While the trip resulted in many conversions, the hardships of the journey were considerable. On many occasions, Mother Ann and her followers were physically abused which may have caused her early death. Priscilla Brewer argues that Mother Ann’s death was most likely the result of mob violence. (Brewer, 1986, 12.) This seems to be substantiated by documents from her exhumation in 1834. As Eldress Asenath Clark wrote:

> During which preparations the society had free access to view the bones of these venerable messengers of peace [and] salvation who first brought life [and] immortality to light in this out day, and who waded through sore afflictions, privations [and] cruel persecutions, both in England [and] America for the good of souls. Some marks of their suffering were yet visible – On the left side of Mother’s scull [sic] could be seen a fracture, said to be made when she was dragged down stairs feet foremost by her persecutors, when at Petersham.

Thus, in the early dawn of the American Revolution, when the rights of conscience began to be established, the Morning Star of Christ’s Second Coming, disappeared from the view of the world, to be succeeded by the increasing brightness of the *Sun of Righteousness* and all the promised glory of the latter day.29 [Figure 3-4.]

Mother Ann’s death was a tragic event in the history of Shakerism. However, it was not the death knell for Shakerism as similar deaths had been for other religious communities. Although Shakerism was still in a formative stage, Mother Ann had laid the foundation for an enduring religion, one that transcended individuals and that persists to the present. She had led a small group of devoted followers to a promised land where people longed for salvation.30

**A City on the Hill: A Religious Place**

While the English origins of the Shakers are readily acknowledged, the influence

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of the American places in which they established themselves is sometimes ignored. The establishment and transformation of the Shakers into a successful religious movement is related to the environment in which they found themselves. The landscape of New England and upper New York State was shaped both physically and intellectually by the First Great Awakening and the ideas of preachers such as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield.31 As Goodall notes, the ideas of the First Great Awakening, particularly the possibility of a personal connection with God, were fundamental to shaping the cultural landscape surrounding New Lebanon:

Because of their isolation, the inability to recruit and support a resident minister, and the infrequent appearances of itinerants, Yankee settlers relied on experimental religions – the direct experience of the Scriptures on the thoughtful Christian – to inform the moral precepts which guided their daily actions. Out of this spiritual practice, the idea of the “new birth” arose to provide liberating resolution to their lives.32

As the primary progenitor of many theological ideas, Jonathan Edwards has a direct connection to the Shakers and, in many ways, is an intellectual antecedent.

Jonathan Edwards was one of the foremost eighteenth century theologians in the English-speaking world.33 Born in 1703, the Yale educated Edwards began his preaching career when he assumed his late grandfather’s pulpit in Northampton, Connecticut.

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31 The dates of the Great Awakening differ according to the academic source. McLoughlin used the dates 1730-1760 while Alan Heimert and Perry Miller (Alan Heimert and Perry Miller (Eds.) The Great Awakening. New York: The Bobbs Merrill Company, Inc., 1967) use 1739 to 1742. For the purposes of the work, McLoughlin’s dates will be used. Drawing on the works of McLoughlin, the Great Awakening is best understood as a series of revivals, many of which were inconsistent in theology; it was called a ‘great’ awakening due to its widespread nature. See also Jon Butler. “Religion in Colonial America.” J. Butler et al. Religion in American Life: A Short History. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2003:131; Davidson, 1977, 122.

32 Goodall, 1984, 266.

33 Butler, 2003, 129.
Edwards’ sermons were famed for stimulating emotional outpourings. These outpourings stood in contrast only to the preexisting models of religious practice in New England, but also to the rationalism and order of the Enlightenment. It was Edwards’ theological works and sermons that helped to propagate the concept of ‘emotional conversion’ as central to personal salvation. Exemplary of these ‘emotional outpourings’ were the actions of the inhabitants of Northampton that Edwards described at the beginning of the First Great Awakening:

Presently, upon this, a great and earnest concern about the great things of religion, and the eternal world, became the universal in all parts of the town, and among persons of all degrees and all ages... all other talk, but of the spiritual and the eternal things, was soon thrown by; all the conversation in all companies, and upon all occasions, was a time these things only, unless so much as was necessary for people carrying on their ordinary secular business. Other discourse than of things of religion, would scarcely be tolerated in any company. The minds of people were wonderfully taken off from the world, it was treated amongst us as a thing of very little consequence: these seem to follow the worldly business, more as a part of their duty, than from any disposition they had to it; the temptation now seem to lie on that hand, to neglect worldly affairs too much and to spend too much time in the immediate exercise of religion...36


35 Ironically, Edwards believed in predestined election and the innate sinfulness of humanity, and worried that his ideas would be bastardized by overly enthusiastic and uneducated ministers; indeed, his ideas were widely used by people with whom he disagreed theologically. For example, Edwards had many issues with the religious ideas of the Separatist Baptists and vice versa. Edwards also did not believe that the purpose of experimental religion was to provide solace. He believed that experimental religion was to be a strenuous means to set the world right. Many of the Separatist Baptists would later accept Edwards’ views through Isaac Backus, another leader of the Awakening. McLoughlin, 1978, 75; Williams, 2002, 140; Heimert and Miller, 1967, l-liii; Butler, 2003, 130.

Religious matters become more important to the people of Northampton than their daily duties. Clearly many people participated in the revival.

Northampton is particularly important to the history of the First Great Awakening. Home to previous revivals under Edwards’ grandfather, the Reverend Solomon Stoddard, none reached the fevered pitch of the revival of 1734-1735 under Edwards. The Northampton revival of 1734-1735 can be seen as a prelude to and cause of the First Great Awakening in New England. As word spread of the events in Northampton, in part because of Edwards’ book, A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God, and the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton, and the Neighbouring Towns and Villages of New Hampshire, in New England, in a Letter to the Rev Dr Benjamin Coleman, of Boston, many other communities had similar revivals and outpourings of religious expression.37

These revivals supplanted Calvinism as the primary framework for religious belief in New England. At this time most colonists in the Americas were Calvinists who believed that they were predestined to Hell for their sins. The First Great Awakening and its revivals radically transformed perceptions of God and daily behaviour. God became accessible to anyone without the need for priestly intercession.38 Thus, all people could be saved. Baritz argues that this change was central to Edward’s theology:

37Heimert and Miller, 1967, xviii; Edwards, 1808. 16-17.

38As Heimert and Miller (1967, xiii-xiv, note 1) state, there are five doctrinal points which identify the Calvinists: unconditional election of the saved by God; limited atonement by Christ enabling some to be saved; total depravity of human beings; irresistible grace, understood to be the passivity of man in regeneration; and the predestination of the saved.
The single bridge between God and man was neither the clergy nor the Bible, because both would be distorted by the unconverted, by natural man, but the Holy Spirit, which would make man willing to hear and see and feel rightly, would rearrange and add to man’s nature.39

Edwards was struck by God’s mercy and compassion in times of social and spiritual crisis. He argued that in a time of profound change in the colonies, the Awakening offered people “extraordinary hope, joy, ecstasy, and release.”40 From the 1690s to the outbreak of the Great Awakening, the colonies, while generally prosperous, had been destabilized by territorial expansion, an increasingly mobile population, varying amounts of economic opportunity, political strife between communities, and changing power and social dynamics.41 There was a spiritual vacuum caused by the collapse of Puritanism.42 The conditions in the period immediately prior to the First Great Awakening primed New England for major transformative changes. As McLoughlin writes,

[i]n short, by 1720 the old ideological framework has lost its political legitimacy and the people needed a new light from God by which to guide their behaviour, measure their goals, and establish new sources of communal authority in church and state.43

Empowered by revitalized religious beliefs and practices brought about by the First Great Awakening, people actively sought God. As Watts and Guyse would write in their introduction to Edwards’ book, “return, o Lord, and visit thy churches, and revive thine

40McLaughlin, 1978, 46.
41Ibid, 51-53.
42Heimert and Miller, 1967, xvii.
43McLaughlin, 1978, 58.
own work in the midst of us.”

These new religious ideas also led to social reform. Converts sought to not only save themselves, but also the whole of society.

The regenerate could not rest content with the world as it was; they wished to make it what it ought to be. Where the old lights saw human progress as slow and gradual, limited by hereditary and environmental contingencies, the new light found the world open to the miraculous – unconditioned, full of new possibilities and unrealized potentials. Religious revivalism, saving souls, is in this respect a political activity, a way of producing a reborn majority to remodel society according to God’s will and with his help.

Efforts to re-conceptualize and remake the world became a central concern for many people during the First Great Awakening. Such concepts are present within Edwards’ theology, including his belief that God’s influence pervaded the entire environment and attention to God’s works could provide a means of better apprehending the world. Edward’s ideas were part of a broader social movement that embraced simplicity in form and expression in plain styles of architecture, action, and written word.

Edwards is most widely known for his sermon Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. This sermon illustrates how powerful words and images taken from the everyday experiences of New Englanders could evoke the horrors of a sinner’s Hell. Edwards described this vividly:

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44 Edwards, 1808, VIII.
47 Baritz, 1964, 88.
49 Baritz, 1964, 60; Sinner, in this case, referred to the unconverted, one who did not experience the ‘new birth’.
There is the dreadful Pit of the glowing flames of the Wrath of God; there is Hell’s wide gaping Mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor any Thing to take hold of: there is nothing between you and Hell but the Air; 'tis only the Power and meer [sic] Pleasure of God that holds you up.50

The emphasis on the divine continence of God’s grace in his sermon (only the will of God could prevent eternal torment in Hell) reflects Edwards’ Calvinist background, but he clearly believed that such a fate was avoidable:

And now you have an extraordinary Opportunity, a Day wherein Christ has flung the Door of Mercy wide open, and stands in the Door calling and crying with a loud voice to poor Sinners; a Day wherein many are flocking to him, and pressing into the Kingdom of God; many are daily coming from the East, West, North and South; many that were very lately in the same miserable Condition that you are in, are now in a happy State, with their Hearts filled with Love to Him that has loved them and washed them in his own Blood, and rejoicing [sic] in Hope of the Glory of God.51

While Edwards remained a believer in Divine election, his works provided for the rise of alternative theological interpretations whereby the act of ‘New Birth’ – accepting Christ to be born again into the Kingdom of God – was sufficient to save an individual. While this particular sermon is intimately and widely associated with the thinking of Edwards, it is an incomplete reflection of his intellectual and theological prowess. Notwithstanding, it was arguably one of his most influential sermons, and one that would have a lasting impact upon intellectual and theological thought in New England. While Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God was a powerful rhetorical device, Edwards’ other writings

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50Edwards, 1741, 12.
51Ibid, 23.
reflected his belief in the majesty of the divine. More accurately, Edwards saw those who accepted God through personal conversion as worthy of His divine compassion and as true inheritors to His Kingdom on Earth. Hellfire was the fate of those who did not accept Christ and of backsliders.

Edwards’ works influenced Congregational and Presbyterian theology within the American colonies and within England and Europe. While Edwards did not become an itinerant preacher himself, many ministers either corresponded with him or visited him. It was through these visits and his many writings that he emerged as the dominant voice for reviverist religion in New England during the First Great Awakening. Edwards’ works were influential in legitimizing the alternative religious beliefs and practices of the American colonies, including the area around New Lebanon.

Edwards’ ideas had a discernable impact upon Shaker theology. This was, in part, because many of the founding Shaker families were keenly aware of his ideas and were moved by them. For example, in 1753, Joseph Meacham’s father, upon hearing Edward’s sermon in Enfield, founded a popular Baptist Church in 1753. Joseph himself was trained as a Baptist lay-minister prior to joining the Shakers. Edwards wrote many

52 Ahlstrom, 2001, 311; Baritz, 1964, 56.
53 As Stephen Stein (“Jonathan Edwards.” in M. Toulouse and J. O. Duck (Eds). Makers of Christian Theology in America. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997: 55-63) notes, many of the foremost theologians in the 18th century, such as Samuel Hopkins, Joseph Bellamy and Jonathan Edwards Jr., were influenced by the works of Edwards and sought to present themselves as his theological heir.
54 Ahlstrom, 2001, 301.
55 Goodall, 1984, 279.
57 Calvin Green Biographical Account of the Life, Character, & Ministry of Father Joseph Meacham the Primary Leader in Establishing the United Order of the Millennial Church. 1827. Manuscript held at
of his theological works while pastor at the Stockbridge Mission in Berkshire County, not far from Pittsfield and New Lebanon. The Mission, established in the 1730s to convert the local native population to Christianity, was the region’s first cultural institution.\footnote{Birdsall, 1959, 34.}

Edwards settled at the Mission following his dismissal from his Northampton pulpit in 1750. He remained until he left to accept the Principal’s position at Yale University in 1758. While at the Mission, he had more time for reflection and writing on theological ideas. Indeed, some of his most important doctoral works, such as the Freedom of the Will, Original Sin, and The Nature of True Virtue, were composed while he lived in Stockbridge.\footnote{John Smith et al. (Eds.) A Jonathan Edwards Reader. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003: XXIII.}

If Edwards was the theologian of the First Great Awakening, the Reverend George Whitefield was its spokesperson. An established and flamboyant Anglican priest, he was a friend of John and Charles Wesley and sometimes identified as an early Methodist. His method of preaching energized his audiences.\footnote{Whitefield was John Wesley’s protégée and a great admirer of his ideas. (Timothy Smith. Whitefield & Wesley on the New Birth. Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1986: 7.) However, as Gaustad and Noll note, Whitefield was too committed a Calvinist to formally join the Methodists. (Edwin Gaustad and Mark Noll. (Eds.) A Documentary History of Religion in America to 1877. 3rd Ed. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003: 160.) In 1740 Whitefield would publically break with John Wesley, though they would continue to work together. (Heimert and Miller, 1967, XXVI; Smith, 1986, 7.)} In the words of McLoughlin,
Whitefield allowed full range to his flair for histrionics. He would sing hymns, wave his arms, tell stories in colloquial language, employ vivid imagery, weep profusely over his own melodramatic appeals, and pray extemporaneously and directly to God, as though he were talking to him.\(^{61}\)

Whitefield’s approach stood in stark contrast to the staid Puritan sermons of New England and had a palpable impact on the population of New England. The path of the 1739-1740 religious revivals in New England closely correlates to his tour of the American colonies.\(^{62}\) Whitefield, whose seven tours of the American colonies and his regular tours of England drew scores, became the archetype for itinerant and evangelical preachers. Ten thousand people were reported to have attended his sermon in Philadelphia in 1741.\(^{63}\) He was prolific, preaching more than 18,000 times in three decades, sometimes spending 40-50 hours a week in the pulpit.\(^{64}\) His preaching style was adopted by many other ministers who spread the ideas of the First Great Awakening throughout the colonies. He was, as Stout termed him, an ‘actor-preacher’ as opposed to a ‘scholar-teacher.’\(^{65}\)

This did not mean that Whitefield was not theoretical or theological. Whitefield, like Edwards, asserted that sinners could repent and be saved.\(^{66}\) He argued that personal and powerful emotional conversion was integral to the process of the ‘New Birth.’ For

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\(^{62}\) Heimert and Miller, 1967, XXV.

\(^{63}\) Butler, 2003, 129.


\(^{65}\) Stout, 1991, XIX.

Whitefield, the ‘New Birth’ was not merely an intellectual or psychological phenomenon, it was a total experience of mind and body that valued hysterical spasms, glossolalia, and trances as part of the personal religious experience among English speaking Protestants.\(^{67}\)

According to Whitefield’s readings of the New Testament, the church consisted of only true converts gathered from the world and who sought to live by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.\(^{68}\) This had profound social and political implications:

> The saints [as Whitefield termed the saved] were responsible for forming communities that fostered collective sacred experience and protected members from profanation. For Whitefield, this task outweighed all other social, political, or economic consideration.\(^{69}\)

Still, for Whitefield, true believers had to be engaged with the world, and like the Wesleys, argued for a more socially concerned Christianity.\(^{70}\)

Whitefield also influenced the early Shakers. From 1749, Manchester was part of Whitefield’s northern tour circuit in England.\(^{71}\) The Shaker movement in England was also said to have been influenced by Whitefield’s Journals.\(^{72}\) While Shaker tradition holds that Mother Ann was a ‘hearer’ of Whitefield and that an early English convert named John Hocknell was an ex-Methodist, the lack of contemporary documentary evidence

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\(^{68}\) Marini, 2001, 14.
\(^{69}\) Ibid.
\(^{70}\) Smith, 1986, 15.
\(^{71}\) Marini, 2001, 75.
\(^{72}\) Ibid, 77.
makes these facts difficult to confirm. Nevertheless, there seems to be a very strong link to some form of early Methodist thought, especially when one considers Brother Daniel Goodrich’s statement and the subsequent research by Brother Theodore [Ted] Johnson and Brother Arnold Hadd. Moreover, as Rack notes, the mystical experiences and the generally chaotic nature of the early Methodist meetings were very similar to early Shaker meetings. Furthermore, when one considers Whitefield’s vision of the Church of Christ, one finds echoes in later works of the Shakers. As Sasson notes, some ‘New Light’ preachers were strikingly similar in their ideas and approach to the early Shakers because the Shakers and other sectarian groups of the period shared a common vocabulary and assumptions concerning the nature of religious experience.

Among ‘New Light’ groups, the Shakers were quite similar to contemporary Baptist movements. Both the Freewill Baptists and the Shakers were linked by virtue of theology and as part of a more widespread rejection of established puritanical beliefs in New England. The Baptists were the largest group to benefit from the First Great

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73Rack, 1989b, 85; Mother Ann’s recollection of being a ‘hearer’ of Whitefield was recalled in the Testimonies of the Life, Character, Revelations, and Doctrine of Mather Ann Lee, and the Elders with Her. (Rufus Bishop and Seth Y. Wells (Eds.) [Revised by Giles Avery.] Testimonies of the Life, Character, Revelations, and Doctrine of Mather Ann Lee, and the Elders with Her, Through whom the Word of Eternal Life was open in this day of Christ’s Second Appearing, Collected from Living Witnesses, in union with the Church, 2nd Ed. Albany: United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing, 1888: 50.) Reference to both Ann Lee’s and John Hocknell’s engagement with Methodism is also documented by Richard Francis (Ann the Word, New York: Arcade Publishing, 2000: 30 & 38). However, the type of Methodism being referred to is slightly problematic: as Stout notes, there was a distinction between Methodism as a type of denomination or methodism as a reform movement within the Anglican Church in the general society at this time. (Stout, 1991, XXIV)


75Rack, 1989b, 85.


77The origins of the Freewill Movement date to 1770 when Benjamin Randel was converted by George Whitefield. Marini, 2001,1 & 64; Williams, 2002, 147.
Awakening. As Marini notes, the appeal of the Baptists was their associational polity and adult baptism as a model for emulating the lives of the Christian apostles.\textsuperscript{78} Between 1778 and 1882 alone, 36 churches were established.\textsuperscript{79} There was overlap in the beliefs of these two emerging communities in the person of Father Joseph Meacham, who had been raised and trained as a Baptist. The Baptist ideals of independence, highly emotional services, principled adherence to experimental religion, limiting membership in the Church to the saved, and the inclusion of women in the leadership of the church corresponds to ideas expressed in Shaker theology.\textsuperscript{80} More broadly, there was an undercurrent in New England and within the Baptist tradition that salvation was only possible through conviction.\textsuperscript{81} Many of the emerging religious groups at this time met an unfulfilled spiritual need, and were part of a more general rejection of established religious practices.

Many of the New Light communities saw the First Great Awakening as a sign of the millennium.\textsuperscript{82} At this time post millennial concepts of the millennium, which perceived the millennium as occurring gradually rather than as a quick and violent event, gained credence as did the idea that the First Great Awakening was a harbinger of America’s future greatness.\textsuperscript{83} New England was an intellectual landscape shaped by Puritans who believed that their settlements would become like “a citty [sic] upon a hill”

\textsuperscript{78}Marini, 2001, 4-5
\textsuperscript{79}Ibid, 46.
\textsuperscript{80}Goodall, 1984, 324; Butler, 2003, 134; Heimert and Miller, 1967, xlvii
\textsuperscript{81}Davidson, 1977, 136.
\textsuperscript{82}Bloch, 1985, 13-15.
\textsuperscript{83}McLoughlin, 1978, 76.
for the world’s emulation; America was conceptualized by many Puritans as a new Israel for God’s chosen people. These settlements, which would serve as religious, social, and political models, were Christian commonwealths commissioned by God to help the world begin anew. There were concerns that the colonists lacked virtue, and there was a widespread underlying concern that the cosmic duty of America could be undermined by the unsaintly. Nevertheless, such concerns were sources of inspiration and action. As Bloch writes, “for in the work of transforming the world from the dominion of Satan to the Kingdom of Christ, the faithful could see themselves directly manifesting the glory of God.” Edwards himself argued that America, particularly New England, was the natural location for the world’s spiritual rebirth. This argument was based on the belief that America, as the ‘New World’ was untouched by the corruption of the old. As Ahlstrom notes, these ideas were present in some of Edwards’ later sermons, published posthumously. Even Edwards hoped that the revival in Northampton was a millennial precursor. As Watts and Guyse wrote in their preface to Edwards’ book, “We are told also by this happy event [the revivals in New England], how easy it will be for our blessed Lord to make a full accomplishment of all his predictions concerning his kingdom, and to spread his Dominion from sea to sea, through all the nations of the

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86 Ibid, 49.
87 Bloch, 1985, 7.
88 Baritz, 1964, 65.
89 Ahlstrom, 2001, 311
90 Baritz, 1964, 64-65.
America has long been a highly favoured country in a religious point of view. The revival here described was, a few years after, followed by one more general; and within the last ten or twelve years, many favourable accounts have been received.

God grant that we may not only hear of these displays of divine grace in other countries, but that similar outpourings of the spirit may be witnessed by us!

O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy!  

Such sentiments were also reflected in other contemporary American writing concerning a renewed covenant with God.

Millennial thought was both a form of social protest and a means to improve the world. In the area surrounding New Lebanon, millennial thought was expressed as political and social concern for the collective pursuit of a Temporal Zion that emulated the Heavenly Kingdom. This echoed a tradition evident during the 1750s and 1760s throughout the American colonies in which the idea of America as the promised land was buttressed by American territorial expansion. In the words of Bloch, “[t]he prospect of colonial civilization expanding into previously uncultivated ‘heathen’ lands was often described in the millennial language of the prophet Isaiah, the wilderness and solitary place become glad or the desert blossoming like a rose.” During the American

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91 Edwards, 1808, IX.
92 Ibid, A2 .
93 This issue is addressed in a subsequent chapter.
95 Goodall, 1984, 292.
96 Bloch, 1985, 47.
Revolution, millennial ideas continued to wield important interpretive power, becoming a prominent feature of the American consciousness.\textsuperscript{97} The Revolution nurtured the idea that America was the seat of the millennial kingdom by linking nationalist ideals with the 

**Book of Revelation:**

\begin{quote}
Simply by providing an asylum for the oppressed and setting an example to the world, the American nation would prove the means of advancing the cause of freedom and righteousness across the earth. Elements of nationalism and universalism thus were drawn together in a kind of passive political messianism, according to which American principles, not power, would ultimately prevail through the globe. . . . By interpreting the ultimate meaning of the Revolution in the sacred terms of biblical tradition, revolutionary millennialism infused the highest political ideals of the patriot movement with a transcendent religious significance and gave contemporary actions a pivotal place in the cosmic scheme of history.\textsuperscript{98}
\end{quote}

While some of the religious communities formed in this period, including the Shakers and the Universal Friends, opposed the development of a militant millennialist nationalism, they were nonetheless influenced by politicized revolutionary millennialist thought. Indeed, they can be understood as a reaction against it.

Thus, it is important to note that the structure and development of Protestant churches during the First Great Awakening were closely linked to the theological ideas and values of their respective congregants and the places in which they existed. The particular narratives associated with these places shaped not only the intellectual environment for these communities, but also how greater society should be apprehended. As Pointer notes, “the colonial religious bodies were never simple or even primarily institutional structures; rather they were communities of believers, spiritual organisms

\textsuperscript{97}Bloch, 1985, 50 & 75.

\textsuperscript{98}Ibid, 86.
concerned with the salvation of individuals and the redemption of society.” Ultimately, the First Great Awakening upset long-standing barriers of geography and religious tradition and facilitated the possibility of new models of religious belief, practice, and place.

**Borderland: A Contested Place**

The establishment and survival of religious groups is correlated with their location in the world. As Shipps notes, new religious movements tend to thrive in areas where social and cultural institutions are chaotic. The frontier experience in the New York-New England border region with its lack of established churches and church elites, combined with the experience of the Revolution, and the influx of a strongly evangelical New England settlers resulted in widespread millennial expectations and a desire for greater self-sufficiency. Church self-sufficiency, as opposed to submitting to an absentee church hierarchy, was seen to allow congregations to better care for the needs of their members and to promote equality. Such was the case in the area surrounding New Lebanon. As Birdsall notes, this area was notable for the strong presence of a variety of different religious groups, “a dominance so great as to be remarkable even in religion-saturated New England.”

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100 Williams, 2002, 148


102 Marini, 2001, 5-6; Goodall, 1984, 9-10; Pointer, 1988, 27.

103 Pointer, 1988, 28.

Berkshire Jubilee in 1844. Hopkins, who was a member of a notable Berkshire family and president of Williams College stated that religion was central to understanding the identity and character of the region’s inhabitants. He wrote,

Berkshire was not indeed wholly settled by the descendants of the Puritans, but it was chiefly, it was sufficient to give direction, and tone, and character to society. In almost every town there was a congregational church and no other, and according to the site rites of that, the people worshiped. In connexion [sic] with this worship there was a deep and pervading reverence in society for the worship and institutions of God. The ministers were reverenced; the Sabbath day was reverenced; parents and the aged were reverenced.

While this sermon must be understood as a deliberate narrative developed to mythicize the history of the region, it is useful in illustrating the profoundly religious character of the area. The differing religious beliefs were particularly prevalent in the period of religious revivals between 1776-1783. As Birdsall commented,

Berkshire, in short, served as a spiritual battleground where the soul lost to the orthodox Congregational Church became fair game for the Baptists and Quakers from Rhode Island, or for the small band of Episcopalians drifting east from New York, or even for Mother Ann Lee’s Shaker Missionaries.

This idea of the New York-New England border zone as a testing ground for new religious ideas is also illustrated by Goodall, who states that the New Englanders who settled in this region often exhibited extreme and/or radical religious beliefs. More
broadly within the colony of New York, the years from 1750 to 1775 were marked by a
decrease in the prevalence of orthodox forms of Christianity, the rise of evangelical
beliefs and an acceptance of liberalism.\textsuperscript{109}

Of particular note, within this atmosphere of religious change and
experimentation, is a series of religious revivals in the Berkshire Hills and the Taconic
Ridge centering on the village of New Lebanon in the summer of 1779. These revivals
focused on the imminent return of Christ and the search for millennial perfection.\textsuperscript{110} They
also helped to establish a local religious community which believed in glossolalia,
visions, and prophecy.\textsuperscript{111} As the Shakers wrote in 1823, this was a tumultuous time in the
village of New Lebanon:

Many were powerfully wrought upon, both in body and in spirit, and
deeply convicted of their fallen state. Many also, who has been professors
of religion, began to see the false foundation on which they has hitherto
built their hopes of salvation. Many were favoured with gifts of visions
and prophecies, by which they saw and testified that the day of redemption
was at hand, that the second coming of Christ was nigh, even at the door;
and their meetings resounded to God for his Kingdom to come.\textsuperscript{112}

This recollection gives a sense of the powerful emotional outpouring that occurred in
New Lebanon prior to the arrival of Mother Ann. This reflection of New Lebanon as
existing in a state of spiritual confusion is supported by additional non-Shaker sources. A
late 19\textsuperscript{th} century history of Columbia County noted that such was the fervour of the

\textsuperscript{109}Pointer, 1988, 41.
\textsuperscript{110}Marini, 2001, 52; Whitson, 1983,14.
\textsuperscript{112}Green and Wells, 1823, 17.
revival, that the avocations of life were neglected. However, when Christ failed to appear, the community became disheartened about the prospect of receiving salvation. “Christ’s evident neglect undermined and disorientated the [community’s] spiritual self-confidence: although they felt themselves worthy, they were abandoned and without spiritual guidance.” This feeling was typical of many people who embraced the ideas of the First Great Awakening. Conversions, that initially brought joy, were often followed by feelings of guilt and emptiness, which in turn led the desire to regain that initial feeling of spiritual euphoria by engaging in additional revivals or seeking alternative religious experiences or ideas. For many in the village at New Lebanon, a saviour was found in the person of Mother Ann. Prior to 1780, the Shakers had only managed to convert one person in America. With the conversion of the respective congregations of Joseph Meacham and Samuel Johnson, the New Lebanon Presbyterian minister, the Shaker community in America grew substantially. In the initial years following the formal establishment of the Shaker village at New Lebanon, there was a significant influx of people. In 1787, there were 105 inhabitants; in 1788 there were 189; and in 1789, there were 230 inhabitants. In essence, the religious communities at New Lebanon, in their search for the messiah, had found a messiah in search of a congregation. One can sense a bit of this relationship in the words of Green and Wells,
who noted that it was in this state of spiritual confusion that the community received word of Mother Ann:

This was the state of the people in the spring of 1780 when some of them providentially visited Mother Ann and her little family, and were soon convinced that they were in the very work for which they themselves had been so earnestly praying, and for which they had been looking and waiting with such ardent expectation.\(^\text{117}\)

Key in this passage is the idea that the community was looking and waiting for divine work, and found what they were seeking in the teachings of Mother Ann. This idea is reiterated in Ellis’s history of Columbia County, in which he writes about the conditions in the community following the collapse of the revival:

Naturally enough, disappointment followed the many predictions of these new prophets, and that the reign of peace which they had foretold came not. In despair, they heard of a strange people (Shakers) ‘worshiping in the bush’ and visited them, came away convinced that ‘Mother Ann’ was the woman mentioned in the Apocalypse, and that in her Christ was made manifest on earth. They told her of the desparing anguish of the new converts in New Lebanon, and urged her to come among them with a new plan of salvation.\(^\text{118}\)

A sense of spiritual wanting by the early settlers of New Lebanon permeates Ellis’ work, further illustrating the community’s desire for salvation.

The establishment of the Shaker village at New Lebanon was also facilitated by the Dark Day of 1780. Religious revivals, and their success or failure, are intimately connected with the local economic, political, and social circumstances of the region in

\(^{117}\) Green and Wells, 1823, 17-18.

\(^{118}\) Ellis, 1878, 308.
which they exist. A desire for salvation in some cases was propagated by a key event, interpreted as a millennial harbinger. On the May 19, 1780, most of New England was plunged into darkness, now thought to be the result of the contemporary heavy slash-and-burn land clearing methods used in New England. For many New Lights, the Dark Day of 1780 spoke to millennial expectations. It also resulted in some New Lebanon settlers seeking out Mother Ann. It was these initial New Lebanon converts that would become the foundation of the Shaker in America, and the event is known as the opening of the Shaker gospel in America.\footnote{Stein, 1992, 11-12; Marini, 2001, 78.}

The American Revolution was also important to the development of the Shakers at New Lebanon. The Revolution destabilized preexisting social institutions and the religious status quo by damaging the existing parish system.\footnote{Marini, 2001, 5.} The rhetoric of the Revolution also promoted utopian ideas throughout the population and spread appreciation for the ideals of equity and rights in the American population. The desire to create a new, more virtuous state was expressed by political theorists such as John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas Paine.\footnote{Lyman Sargent. “Utopia and Revolution.” in R. Schaefer et al. (Eds.) Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000: 187.} The outbreak of the Revolution in 1775 also served to transform religious belief, not only in New York and New England, but also in all the nascent United States. In the context of New York, “while the Revolution afforded the chance to restructure the state’s religious order, it also forced New Yorkers to face the daily consequences of war: physical destruction, economic depravation,
emotional depression, and spiritual disillusionment.” Ultimately, the events of the Revolution revitalized millennial beliefs and the desire to live in a more equal and virtuous state.  

The ‘Yankee Zone’

The New York-New England borderland region was shaped by a large in-migration of Yankee settlers, predominantly New Light Baptists and Congregationalists, from southeastern and coastal New England. The migration to this region followed the end of the French and Indian War, and was partly a result of the Separate and New Light Baptists’ rejection of the pre-established social structure in eastern New England. In Berkshire County alone, the growth was considerable. In 1761, Berkshire County had three towns, four plantations, and a population of 700 families. By 1790 the population had increased to 30,000 with 31 towns. Goodall terms this region the ‘Yankee Zone’ and argues that its role within the broader American experience is poorly understood. The ‘Yankee Zone’ extended from the Housatonic River in Massachusetts to the East Bank of the Hudson, from Litchfield County in Connecticut to the Green Mountain settlements in Vermont (figure 3-5). It was a region marked by conflicts between the

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122 Pointer, 1988, 90.  
124 Brewer, 1986, 54; the Separatists were one of the few groups to emerge directly out of the Awakening. As Heimert and Miller (1967, XXXVII) state, many New Englanders, touched by the spirit, separated from their unconverted ministers and organized congregations independent of existing church hierarchies. The separatists was member of the New Light, which refers more generally to those who believed that emotional illumination was a witness of the holy spirit.(Heimert and Miller,1967, XXXVII)  
125 Birdsall, 1959, 19.  
126 Goodall, 1984, 2-3.
Figure 3-5: The Yankee Zone. (Adapted from Goodall, 1984, 4b.)
established Dutch elites and the settling New Englanders and there were conflicting grants between the Colonies of Massachusetts and New York, with Yankee settlers and Dutch landlords claiming in the same territory.\footnote{Ellis, 1878, 36.} Figure 3-6 shows some of the west-most land grants made by Massachusetts that are clearly on the New York side of what would become the New York-Massachusetts border. These territorial claims resulted in violence between Yankee settlers and Dutch landlords, predominantly occurring in the 1750s and the 1760s, but lasting into the 1790s. One particular area in the Yankee Zone is of interest to understanding the early Shakers. Termed ‘The Six Mile Square’ by Goodall, this region encompassed four main communities: New Canaan, New Concord, New Britain, and New Lebanon, all of which are now located in Columbia County.\footnote{Goodall, 1984.} As the names of these four communities would suggest, the earliest settlements in the Yankee borderland, including these four villages, replicated the New England tradition of congregational mass movements.\footnote{Marini, 2001, 35; Goodall, 1984, 95.}

The region also fostered social and familial networks.\footnote{Marini, 2001, 30-31.} The family unit provided the primary identity, socialization, and cultural norms for many of the settlers in this region.\footnote{Ibid, 31.} In the case of the area surrounding New Lebanon, prior associations such as religious communities, business partnerships, friendships, and kin relations were fundamental to the establishment of new communities, particularly for the sharing of
The result was the establishment of primarily homogenous communities, including many extended families, with relatively little hierarchy.

It was these preexisting familial and social networks at New Lebanon that buttressed the establishment of the Shakers. In the Church Family alone at New Lebanon, approximately 75% of converts were possibly members of nuclear kin groups. Only fifteen family groups of more than five people comprised 43% of the converts. Arguably this gathering of people who were already connected through pre-existing familial ties minimized potential conflicts and facilitated the successful transformation of the community from a loose association of individuals to a formal cooperative structure. In addition to these familial ties, Shaker manuscript demographic records suggest additional interconnections. Many Shakers shared a common birthplace. The

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132 Goodall, 1984, 104.

133 Brewer (1986, 23) uses a common last name to identify ‘family units’. This approach will be used in this work, with the understanding that there may be cases where same last name does not connote a familiar connection and that there may be some other familiar connections not recognized by this process.

134 These families were: Bennet - 7; Bishop - 5; Chauncey - 7; Darrow - 5; Farrington - 5; Goodrich - 11; Hamlin - 5; Hammond - 8; Harlow - 6; Johnson - 5; Kendal - 7; Meacham - 7; Spencer - 5; Spire - 5; and Turner - 8.


136 Name and Ages of Those who have been gathered into the Church with the place of their Birth and time Gathering, Departures, and Deaths: Including the names and ages of those who have Deceased throughout the Societies of New Lebanon and Watervliet With the date of their departure, etc. Transcribed April 9, 1848, New Lebanon, Columbia County, New York Sate. Kept by the order of the elders. 1848[—1891] Manuscript: OClWhi M1608 (III B 18); Names, births, places of birth of members of Shaker Community, New Lebanon, c. 1851 Manuscript: OClWhi (III B 13); Statistics relating to Shaker Membership, and farming Activities from 1821 to 1851, c. 1840-1851. Manuscript: OclWhi (III B 13). For this analysis OclWhi (III B 18) was used as the primary source as it was the most complete and detailed. Supplemental information, including spelling correction for names and hometowns, along with providing a double check on the accuracy of OclWhi (III B 18), came from OclWhi (III B 13) and OclWhi (III B 21). While useful in painting a general picture, it should be noted that this data is only one part of a larger picture as it only provides a portrait of the Church Family. Indeed, the data only lists place of birth, not places of habitation, which could reveal even more linkages. There were also undoubtedly natural family members spread across Shaker families and Shakers in different Shaker families who shared the same birthplace. Further analysis could potentially reveal higher percentages than what is presented below.
membership of the Church family at New Lebanon was from 91 different villages and approximately 75% of converts shared a hometown with another Shaker (Figures 3-7, 3-8). Many of these converts were from a few villages. Eight towns were common to more than four families and the people from these eight towns constituted nearly 34% of the total population of the Church family at New Lebanon before 1806. This suggests stronger links than Brewer has identified and supports the argument that many of these converts reflect the tendency of congregations to move and convert \textit{en masse}. Moreover, when one combines either a common last name or birthplace, nearly 86% of the Church Family Shakers had a likely connection with someone else.

This demographic data is bolstered by accounts of the early converts and their religious backgrounds. Calvin Green’s chronicle of Father Joseph’s life in New Lebanon states that New Lebanon was a district marked by the prevalence of ‘separatist and new light Baptists’. Additionally, in Birdsall’s history of Berkshire County, the village of Hancock, which was home to Mother Lucy’s in-laws and the birthplace of thirteen people who would convert to Shakerism and join the Church Family, was identified as a settling

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\(^{137}\) The towns are Dover, NY (Bracket, Ellis, Harlow, Joslin - 4 people); Enfield, Conn - (Billings, Markham, Meacham, Pease, Tiffany - 14 people); Groton, Conn (Goodrich, Rathbone, Spencer, Spire - 8 people); Hancock, Mass (Goodrich, Green, Hammond, Harrison, Kibbee, Sanford, Shapley, Talcott, Turner - 13 people); Mansfield, Conn (Mosley, Pemonds(?), Trip, Turner - 7 people); New Lebanon, NY (Bishop, Darrow, Dickerson, Ellis, Farrington, Johnson, King, Smith, Spier, Spire - 14 people); Scituate (RI) Beecher, Hammond, Hammond, Matthewson, Wright - 8 people); and Somers, Conn (Billings, Farrington, Tiffany, Wood - 7 people)

Figure 3-7: Hometowns of New Lebanon Shakers - By Last Name. Author’s Image.
Figure 3-8: Hometowns of New Lebanon Shakers - By Community. Author’s Image.
place for the Rhode Island Baptists. Another early history of Massachusetts also notes a prevalence of settlers from Connecticut and Rhode Island, and the dominance of the Baptist church, in the village of Hancock. The commentary of a visitor to the Shakers in 1786 seems to further substantiate these statements:

I find these Shakers are almost to a man Converts fr. The Rh. Isld. And Narraganset Baptists called there New Lights & Separates – accustomed in their Narrag. Meetings to work themselves up to high Enthusiasm, so as in Worship all the congregation to get to speaking, repaying, & singing all at the same time.

The idea that communities converted en masse is supported by Ellis in his examination of the conversions of both Joseph Meacham’s Baptist congregation and Samuel Johnson’s Presbyterian congregation. As he states, both the Baptist and Presbyterian churches in New Lebanon essentially ceased to exist because conversions to Shakerism were so extensive.

In Figure 3-9, one can see additional evidence of preexisting familial and social networks in New Lebanon. These homestead locations, while approximate, nonetheless suggest the close-knit nature of the community. This closeness is also clear in the 1779

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139Birdsall, 1959, 22.
142Ellis, 1878, 310-311.
143Not all of these names will be found in the identified manuscript documents (n. 136) as these only provide information on the Church Family, and not the other families into which many early converts were also gathered. The figure is adapted from a manuscript map created by Tom Donnelly. (Tom Donnelly. Early Shaker Homesteads. Manuscript: MPH 9783.ME. n.d.)
Figure 3-9: Location of Shaker Families pre-amalgamation of lands at New Lebanon. Adapted from Tom Donnelly. Early Shaker Homesteads, Manuscript: MPH 9783.ME. n.d. The black names show the sites of homesteads of families who converted to Shakerism and the red names show the future location of the Shaker Families.
Tax Roll for the region. This list, which detailed the owners of adjacent properties in geographical order, identifies five early converts (Isaac Harlow, Joseph Meacham, Reuben Wight, David Darrow and George Darrow) as owners of five out of six adjacent parcels in the area that was to become the North and Church Families. Consolidating all Shakers into a common area would not have been arduous as the lands upon which New Lebanon Shaker village was established were already settled by convert families.

The Importance of Contextual Places

While pre-existing familiar and community ties were crucial, it is important to understand that the establishment of Shakerism was also due to the particular intellectual and theological landscape established by the First Great Awakening and the frontier experience of the Yankee Zone. Moreover, the prevalence of diverse religious groups and revivals in the area surrounding New Lebanon primed the local population for the ideas of Mother Ann. In the words of Brewer, “To a generation of evangelical Americans looking for a truly millennial reformation, a life without sin, Shaker theology and social structure provided a welcome combination of spiritual salvation and temporal security.” The sharing of resources, the dedication of labour for the society as a whole, and the pacifist avoidance of military conscription allowed the Shakers not only to survive the Revolution and the chaotic nature of the Yankee Zone but also to flourish. In any event, it was from this greater environment that many intellectual and theological

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144 *An Assessment Rool [sic] of King’s District*. 1779 Manuscript: Original Source Unknown. Photocopy held by author. The location of the original is unknown. A copy is held by the Shaker Museum and Library (Old Chatham, NY.)


146 Goodall, 1984, 338.
narratives were drawn. To reiterate the argument of Sasson, the Shakers shared with other religious groups of the period a common vocabulary and religious assumptions.¹⁴⁷ Among the most pervasive of the narratives that the Shaker shared with other groups of the period was the Covenantal narrative. Indeed, the idea of the covenant is central to understanding the Shaker experience and, as such, merits further consideration. Before exploring the idea and the importance of the Covenant to the Shakers, it is important to understand the context of the antebellum period, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR
SHAPING THE SHAKERS AND AMERICA:
BETWEEN THE REVOLUTION AND CIVIL WAR

The antebellum period – from the end of the American Revolutionary War to the outbreak of the American Civil War – saw the transformation of the Shakers from a loose band of Believers living on freehold lots to a highly organized and financially successful Society containing both organized communal villages and out-families. Within Shaker society, New Lebanon Shaker Village stood as the nexus for the faith. In contrast to some understandings of the Shakers, however, New Lebanon Shaker Village was well integrated in the World. The Shakers recognized that they were not self-sufficient and realized that there must be interaction with the World’s People to whom they sold items and from whom they purchased goods, services, and gained converts.¹ As a result of this interaction, the development of New Lebanon Shaker Village did not exist within a vacuum. While the Shakers had a vision of how to bring about God’s Kingdom on Earth, they were nonetheless the product of modernity, and their vision reflected that modernity. Thus, before one can examine the Shaker understanding of their covenantal relationship with God, the Shaker experience must itself be situated in the antebellum context. This includes examining the transformative nature of American society at this time as well as illustrating the major changes that occurred within Shakerism.

Building New Lebanon

The Shakers were community builders. In 1778, there were no more than nine Shakers; by 1803 there were more than one thousand six-hundred Believers.² By the 1820s, the Shakers would number more than four thousand in sixteen villages located more than one thousand miles apart.³ In part, this success depended on the Shaker ability to develop an imagined community. The Shakers were accomplished at developing a particular sense of how their Earthly Zion should appear, and putting it into practice.⁴ They developed a distinct identity that permeated all aspects of Shaker life and place through the selection of specific materials and spiritual symbols known to all members. This identity served to unify the Shaker communities across all of their communities, and drew upon a particular sense of architecture, village planning, and material culture.⁵ In other words, the Shakers developed a distinctive geography represented by their places and their landscapes.

Still, scholars have not comprehensively examined New Lebanon Shaker Village, the primary nexus for Shakerism. While scholars and popular writers alike have written many notable works addressing the Shakers as a collective whole, and while these works

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³De Vinne, 2003, 218
refer to New Lebanon’s importance, none has focused exclusively on the community.\(^6\)

Further, beyond several monographs and unpublished dissertations on specific aspects of
New Lebanon, there is no comprehensive document on the site’s history and
development. Moreover, the development of New Lebanon was neither straightforward
nor simple as there were many interpretations concerning how Shakerism should appear
to the World’s People.

The Shaker Ministry’s decision to move to New Lebanon in the 1780s was more
than a mere physical move. It would reorient the Shakers’ understanding of their
communities and places. In 1784, Father James wrote to Henry Vanschoyk – also known
as Van Schaach – to articulate his concern with attacks on the Shaker Community and to
solicit his support.\(^7\) Vanschoyk’s response is enlightening on the dedication of the early
Shakers to their beliefs. He wrote that he did not understand the Shaker desire to subject
themselves to abuse and cruelty rather than use the courts and magistrates to protect
themselves.\(^8\) His letter also alludes to the fact that the Shakers were considering a move

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\(^7\) James Whittaker. Letter to Henry Vanschoyk at Richmound. Manuscript: NOC 9531. November 13, 1784. Henry Van Schaack was the son of a prominent merchant, who also participated in the fur trade. While he was a colleague of many members of the English elite (including William Johnson) and was branded a Loyalist, he was also a member of the Committee of Correspondence of Albany County (a revolutionary committee) and corresponded with Alexander Hamilton. He would remain in the United States following the war, settling in Pittsfield, MA. Stefan Bielinski. “Henry Van Schaack.” <<www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/us/hvschaack.html>> Created 7/25/02. Accessed February 28, 2009.

\(^8\) James Whittaker and Henry Van Schaack. Correspondence between James Whittaker and Henry Van Schaack. Manuscript: NOC 9532. 1784 [ 16 Feb, 1866]: 2. While the original of James Whittaker’s has survived, (NOC 9531), the original of Van Schaack’s did not. Instead, it was transcribed in 1866 by his nephew H. C. Van Schaack who wrote the following: “Agreeable to my promise I now send you, on forgoing form pages, copies of the letters which passed in 1784, between Elder Whittaker and my uncle Henry Van Schaack then a resident of Richmond and afterwards of Pittsfield - I think you will admit my uncles letter is a pretty good sermon. If Elder Whittakers letter is wanted by your Society, I will exchange it for something of your manufacturing.” (4)
to a more hospitable environment, and that they should reconsider such a move.\textsuperscript{9} New Lebanon was, in part, chosen for its geographical location on the east bank of the Hudson and greater ease of travel to other eastern communities.\textsuperscript{10} It was also away from the more traditionalist stronghold of Albany. The location of the meeting house may also have been symbolic; it was built on the location of George Darrow’s homestead where an anti-Shaker mob attacked Mother Ann on September 2, 1783.\textsuperscript{11} The Shakers raised their meeting house on October 15, 1785 and on January 29, 1786, the first meeting took place.\textsuperscript{12} As the Shakers wrote, before the establishment of the meeting house, there was no regularization of worship and a scattering of Believers.\textsuperscript{13} It was at this first meeting that Father James particularly exhorted Believers to embrace God’s word to become His Chosen People in his Promised Land.\textsuperscript{14}

The Shakers formally established the Church at New Lebanon on Christmas Day 1787.\textsuperscript{15} New construction quickly followed, including a communal dwelling built by the summer of 1788.\textsuperscript{16} Early descriptions of this community are sparse. Nevertheless, an account by Julian Ursyn Niemcevicz illustrates the nature of the community at this time:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{9}Ibid, 4.
\item \textsuperscript{10}Stein, 1992, 43.
\item \textsuperscript{11}Grant, 1994, 8. George Darrow was an early convert and his property formed the core of the fledgling Shaker village.
\item \textsuperscript{12}Ministry Journal (Sisters - Mount Lebanon). Manuscript: OCIWHi Shaker Collection, MSS No. V: B-60: 4.
\item \textsuperscript{13}“History of the Church of Mt. Lebanon, N.Y. No 3.” The Manifesto. Vol XIX, No. 9. (September, 1889):195
\item \textsuperscript{14}Robinson, 1893, 26.
\item \textsuperscript{15}Koomler, 2000, 20.
\item \textsuperscript{16}Records kept by Order of the Church., 1780-1855, Wednesday August 27, 1788.
\end{itemize}
The Shaker settlement lies in a most abundant valley. It is made up of about 20 large, well-built houses and amidst them is the church, in the same form as the dwelling. On the first floor is a large hall where the service takes place, and on the second floor live the oldest man and the oldest woman. The community is divided into families; each one with a leader or elder, occupies one house, the men separate and the women separate. Some of the men farm; others work in various trades. The whole valley is covered with gardens in which are vegetables, orchards, fields—everything, in the best possible state of cultivation. The harvest from the fields and gardens, the things made by the workshops, everything, goes into a common warehouse from which the whole organization is supplied.¹⁷

Central to understanding New Lebanon and its changes is the Shaker use of spiritual gifts.¹⁸ The Shakers understood that the temporal Zion needed to reflect the Heavenly Jerusalem’s order.¹⁹ Unity was also desired as the Shakers believed that a true Christian community could only occur when there was spiritual unity.²⁰ However, while the Shakers were consummate in their ability to project unity, internally there were often competing and disparate concepts of Shakerism.

The Shakers in the antebellum period existed in a dynamic context that inevitably influenced their development. There were shared values within the Shaker faith that remained consistent throughout the antebellum period. This included the importance of their covenantal relationship with God. Throughout the antebellum period, and beyond, the Shakers maintained a fluid doctrinal system that focused on five core beliefs: purity;

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¹⁸Promey, 1993, 22.
²⁰Taylor, 1991, 47-48
unity; simplicity; equality; and industry. However, this system also reflected broader widespread social trends:

The symbols and metaphors which informed Shaker narrative developed over the early decades of the nineteenth century. Metaphors of nourishment and travel, images of jewels and precious metal, the depiction of stripping away of dirty attire and assuming the garments of righteousness, the portrayal of the New Zion as a clean, spacious house or a fruitful garden – all are ultimately biblical in origin and are occasionally found in the religious language of other Christians.

The Shakers saw change as a necessary aspect of this system: “It became necessary, from time to time, to introduce changes into the order of the family to meet the present conditions, and to secure the best results that might be developed in a religious Community.” Green and Wells stated that progress and change were an integral part of Shakerism, arguing that perfection, as applied to a Christian life, involved embracing progress and continual improvement. Utility was still the watchword for introducing new ideas and inventions of the World. Father Joseph argued that useful and necessary inventions should be used or improved, but superfluous ones should not. In his A Few Lines Relating to Church Order, he articulated this position by expressly stating that:

23 “History of the Church of Mt. Lebanon, N.Y. No. 8,” February, 1890, 26.
24 Green and Wells, 1823, 320.
25 Meacham, c. 1790, 29.
All work done or things made in the Church for their own use ought to be faithfully and well done but plain, without superfluity. All things ought to be made according to their order and use and all things kept decent and in good order according to their order and use. All things made for sale ought to be well done suitable for their use.\textsuperscript{26}

The Shaker position on this matter was not unique. This rejection of Worldly things and embracing the gospel of Christ was reflected in other contemporary religious writings. John Camp, a pastor from Canaan village located near New Lebanon Shaker Village, also argued that the Kingdom of God was near at hand. Like the Shakers, he maintained that ‘spiritual labour’ was required to enter God’s Kingdom. He also rejected materialism: “Never let Worldly things engross their attention, so as to crowd out a constant, proper sense of the important cause they have engaged in.”\textsuperscript{27} Still, as Shakerism expanded, new converts brought with them accepted contemporary values.\textsuperscript{28} The Shakers embraced these discourses, including those of the United States which at this time was struggling to determine what the broader idea of ‘freedom for all’ meant and could be put into practice. Therefore, how the Shakers sought to bring about God’s Kingdom on Earth must be situated in the antebellum context including the transformative nature of American society during this time: the role of religion; revival, millennialism and the Second Great Awakening; the rise of print culture; and the rise of Spiritualism.

\textsuperscript{26}Meacham, c. 1790, 27-28.


\textsuperscript{28}Sasson, 1983, 212.
A Dynamic and Transforming Place

Between 1790 and 1830, the United States was significantly transformed. The Revolutionary era was in many ways a marketplace of visions for the new United States. As Miller writes, “the century following the War of Independence saw tremendous shifts in politics, geography, demographics, economics, class, religion and family.” This period is known as the Federalism period in American history and marks the time when the U.S. Constitution and foreign relations were developed and refined. It was “an extraordinary time, but a time of achingly slow communications and travel, primitive and perverse medical care, a moral code that had only begun to condemn slavery, and ways of living that seem today an odd mixture of the charming, the crude, and the particular.” The American Revolution was part of a broader realignment of European society stemming from the Enlightenment, with its questioning of long held assumptions and beliefs, including those about religion, philosophy, architecture, and societal models.

In response to these dramatic changes, individual Americans often turned to religion for stability and comfort, exploring all religious persuasions that promised deliverance. For Barkun,
virtuous New England rather than corrupt England was the instrument of victory, with the implication that the arena of millenarian battle had shifted decisively from Europe to America. The gradual assimilation of political liberty to millenarian history marked “a subtle but profound shift in emphasis– the religious values that traditionally defined the ultimate goal of apocalyptic hope– the conversion of all nations to Christianity– became diluted with, and often subordinate to, the commitment to America as a new seat of liberty.”

This new sense of freedom had a profound impact on Church membership:

“Constitutional principles of freedom of separation of Church and State forced every church to compete for members, funds, and status in a free and open marketplace.” The joy and comfort of divine forgiveness was expressed vocally, physically, and emotionally. Emotions and intuition replaced logic and stern piety as the means to find forgiveness. As Hatch writes, “America’s nonrestrictive environment permitted an unexpected and often explosive conjunction of evangelical fervor and popular sovereignty.” For religious adherents, this meant that salvation was possible through individual submission to Christ by leading a holy life and obedience to the commandments. It facilitated and bolstered a belief in the progress and even perfectability of society through human works. The result was the growth of new churches and religions. Within New York State alone, between the end of the American

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37 Toulouse and Duke, 1997, 89.
Revolution when church subsidies were discontinued and 1865, fifty three different religions established themselves.\textsuperscript{41}

This period was marked by the rise of religious revivals; reform movements; and utopian and socialist experimentation.\textsuperscript{42} These movements all sought to transform society and there were many linkages between them.\textsuperscript{43} Some, like the Shakers, sought to expand the traditional notions of family and home.\textsuperscript{44} By 1840, nearly 100,000 Americans were or had been members of some form of utopian or socialist community.\textsuperscript{45} Many of these communities were deliberate efforts to redesign society in response to the rise of industrialization and urbanization, emphasizing the importance of the pastoral and nature.\textsuperscript{46} The period saw the rise of voluntary associations for missionary, reformatory, education, or benevolent/humanitarian purposes. Temperance, anti-slavery, and religious tract societies proliferated in this period. A significant undercurrent in the antebellum period was the Transcendental Movement, which celebrated a belief in human divinity by which every individual could discover the glories and mysteries of the universe and even hear the voice of God itself through intuitive contemplation.\textsuperscript{47} In a broader context, there were two main schools of thought influencing American life: Scottish Common-Sense

\begin{footnotes}
\item[42] Williams, 2002, 191; Brown, 2002,
\item[44] Ibid, 466.
\item[46] Ibid.
\item[47] Remini, 2002, 4-5.
\end{footnotes}
philosophy (which emphasized the importance of sensory experience and the scientific method); and Romanticism (which placed an emphasis on imagination, organic interconnectivity, the beauty of nature and emotional response). There was also an air of pragmatism that informed American life, exemplified by popular publications discussing the practical applications of science and celebrating individuals who advocated utilitarianism.

This period saw many movements calling for a more authentic or primitive Christianity, combined with an expectation of the coming millennium and the importance of America in the coming ‘end times.’ The personal experience of conversion to Christ as key to salvation was emphasized. More radical theologies were accepted. Hatch explains the implications:

Increasingly assertive common people wanted their leaders unpretentious, their doctrines self-evident and down-to-earth, their music lively and singable, and their churches in local hands.

Many religious communities established in the 1770s, including the Shakers, Universalists, and Freewill Baptist communities, were starting to move toward more institutionalized structures in response to the changes. The Methodists also grew in

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49 Burleigh, 2003, 207.
50 Hatch, 1989, 166. ‘End Times’ refers to the period in the Christian Bible found in the Book of Revelations.
51 Toulouse and Duke, 1997, 94.
54 Bloch, 1985, 167.
popularity, despite criticism that Methodism was dangerously ‘un-American.’55

The rise of American Revolutionary millennialism marked the 1780s.56

Immediately following the end of hostilities, many Americans questioned the meaning and future of the new nation.57 The United States was often lauded as a new and glorious empire, serving as a haven for the oppressed. It was also a place where people interpreted events in religious terms. As Hatch argues, “judging by the number of sermons, books, and pamphlets that addressed prophetic themes, the first generation of United States citizens may have lived in the shadow of Christ’s second coming more intensely than any generation since.”58 There was an increased interest and interpretation of events as signs of the millennium.59 Even the Shaker message concerning the new earth was not unique for its time. As written in the *Theological Magazine* in 1796, “The new earth is presented as designed for the reception of holy beings.”60 This was echoed in another article in the same magazine in 1797.61 Many people questioned whether the new government would prove as transformative as anticipated as the millennial expectations of the previous eras were unfulfilled in the period immediately following the establishment of the United States.62 The circumstances of the war had been devastating for many communities, and

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56Bloch, 1985, 94.
57Ibid, 95.
58Hatch, 1989, 184.
59Pointer, 1988, 125.
62Bloch, 1985, 102-104.
many groups were not prepared for the emergence of religious activity following the end of hostilities in 1783. At the war’s end, only approximately 10% of the American population were members of any organized religious community. The war ravaged the religious landscape of the new country; many of the country’s meeting houses were destroyed and its Loyalist ministers had fled.

Nevertheless, religious belief found particular expression in the Second Great Awakening in the late eighteenth century. The Awakening was a reaction in part to real and perceived acts of immorality within the new American nation. It was not orchestrated but a spontaneous result of social, political, and economic changes in the post Revolutionary period, building on the spiritual and theological underpinnings that informed religious thought in the United States during the eighteenth century. There was widespread concern that the economic growth and wealth of the new nation would undermine religious principles. In rejecting the trappings of aristocracy and privileged learning, Americans increasingly valued individual initiative and enterprise, but feared

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65 Ibid, 167.
66 The Second Great Awakening has been dated as early as 1796 and has been noted as having high points, in 1807-1808, following the War of 1812, and peaking between 1825 and 1837, and lasting as late as the 1850s. Cross, 1982, 9-13; Andrew, 1978, 4. The Theological Magazine noted the spread of Second Great Awakening in 1796. A School Divine at Stockholm. “On the New Heaven and New Earth.” The Theological Magazine. Vol, II. No. 2. (November and December, 1796). It should be noted that Bratt argues that division of American religious history into distinct eras is problematic, arguing for a greater exploration concerning the interconnection between periods, contexts, and landscapes of faiths. James Bratt, “The Reorientation of American Protestantism, 1835-1845.” Church History. Vol. 67. No. 1. (March 1998): 54-57.
68 Pointer, 1988, 124-125.
egotism and the fragmenting potential of individualism.\(^{69}\) In contrast with the previous Great Awakening, Protestant ideals were linked with democratic action and there was increased emphasis on the individual. This change shaped the tone of the Second Great Awakening.\(^{70}\) Many new belief systems were articulated through these religious ideas.\(^{71}\) There was a rise in missionary activity amongst many denominations, in part to Christianize the American nation.\(^{72}\) Through Americanization of religious ideas, the Second Awakening brought meaning and identity to many new Americans, and created a unifying bond for a disparate people who increasingly saw themselves as the chosen people of God in his chosen land.\(^{73}\) It was not coincidental that millennialism and utopianism were undercurrents in American society at this time, as both demonstrated a commitment to the concept of a reconstructed world where the righteous would prevail.\(^{74}\)

The leaders of the Second Great Awakening appealed to American patriots by linking the universal qualities patriots fought for during the Revolution with religion. As in earlier periods, there was also a link between millennialism and the American way of life. “Just as the American Political system would lead the World to equality and justice, so would American revivals inaugurate the thousand years’ reign of Christ on earth before the Second Coming and the end of the World.”\(^{75}\) This attitude was reflected not

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\(^{69}\) Matthews notes in particular that books were equated with luxury. Matthews, 1991, 18& 60.


\(^{71}\) Marini, 2001, 136.


\(^{74}\) Barkun, 1986, 10

\(^{75}\) Cross, 1982, 79.
only in traditional religious beliefs, but also in new religions and in the new ‘civil’ religion of nationalism.

New Lebanon stood at the eastern boundary of the “Burned Over District,” so named for its spiritual ferment.76 The District was a section of western New York engulfed by repeated revivals inspired by itinerant preachers who argued that the individual could find God without an established church. The people in the District provided the membership for not only the Shakers, but also the Mormons, Millerites, the Perfectionists, and various other social experiments.77 Indeed, individuals often experimented with membership in several different groups before deciding upon which community to join78

The religious revivals of the Burned Over District drew heavily on pre-existing rural Yankee traditions that dominated the area.79 Revivals were central to the Second

76Williams, 2002, 186; As Folts argues, Cross’ analysis was limited in its scope as the Burnt Over District can be understood to extend from Western Massachusetts/ Vermont into Ohio/Michigan. James Folts. “The Fanatic and the Prophetess: Religious Perfectionism in Western New York, 1835-1839.” New York History, Vol. 72 No.4. (1991) 358.

77The Mormons, more commonly known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church), was originally based in the area around Palmyra, NY. The main text is the Book of Mormon (1827), which was written by Joseph Smith, Jr. The Millerites were the followers of William Miller who prophesied the second coming of Jesus Christ in 1843. The Perfectionists were based at the Oneida Community in Oneida New York, and were followers of the teachings of John Humphrey Noyes.

78The Shakers themselves noted this increase in communal societies in 1858; however, they argued that none had achieved the balance of the Shakers themselves. “In the public mind an unusual amount of interest attaches to these organizations, from the consideration that among the tens of thousands, in both Europe and America, who (theoretically) as fully indorse the principle of community of goods, and approve the abnegation of the private, selfish property principle, as do the ‘American Shakers’ themselves yet hitherto no attempts to found and perpetuate a community of interest and of goods, and to reconstruct society upon this basis, have proved really successful . . .” Frederick Evans et al. Ann Lee (The Founder of the Shakers), A Biography, with Memoirs of William Lee, James Whittaker, J. Hocknell, J. Meacham, and Lucy Wright; Also A Compendium of the Origin, History, Principals, Rules and Regulations, Government and Doctrines of the United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing. 4th Edition. London: J. Burns, 1858: 35.

79Cross, 1982, 50.
Great Awakening. The outbreak of revivals occurred in two places: the old South West and in the Eastern Communities of New England. The New England revivals were centred on Connecticut, particularly in its congregational churches and at Yale University. Often held in frontier camp meetings, these revivals were designed to cultivate religious fervor; for example, through such camps, the Methodists “hoped to subdue America’s undisciplined religious and cultural spaces, urban and rural.”

The simple architecture of these camps suggested plainness and piety. One of the most famous revivals was the Cane Ridge Revival in Kentucky. The congregation at Cane Ridge was part of a larger schismatic movement of New Light Presbyterians, who combined a commitment to democracy with anti-institutionalism and radical Congregationalism.

Held in August, 1801, it lasted more than a week and drew thousands of people (figure 4-1.) As one contemporary observer noted, August 6, 1801. Mass meeting. 10,000 to 25,000 people. The noise of the crowd was like the roar of Niagara. Some of the people were singing, others praying, some crying for mercy. I saw at least 500 swept down in a comment as if a battery of a thousand guns had been opened upon them, and them immediately followed shrieks and shouts that rent the heavens.

Many traditional eastern ministers decried these revivals as the manifestation of demonic

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82 Robins, 1994, 169.
83 Ibid.
84 Stein, 1992, 58.
influence. Still, such seemingly chaotic acts were understood as symbolic by those who participated in and observed the acts. Ultimately, the frontier camp meetings “created a public square in the wilderness and drew people to the presence, order, and purpose of other people.” Today, the log meetinghouse from Cane Ridge has become a symbol of frontier American Christianity (figure 4-2). These revivals also contributed to the development of Shaker theology into a coherent system through the increasingly competitive nature of the various religious bodies present at these meetings. As a result of having to compete for new members with other new religious movements, the Shakers

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87 Robins, 1994, 170.  
88 Ibid, 173.  
89 Ahlstrom, 2004, 433.  
The growth of the Second Great Awakening and the new religious movements of this era brought about important changes in the culture of both religion and communication including the development of a democratic and popular print culture of pamphlets, booklets, tracts, magazines, devotional books, hymn books, journals, and newspapers.\textsuperscript{91} Church music was fundamentally altered in the antebellum period with the

\textsuperscript{91}Hatch, 1989, 11 & 141.
introduction of folk music and vernacular song. The era also saw the growth of religious periodicals. The American Tract Society produced more than five hundred titles in its first twenty-five years (1825-1850), totaling more than forty-four million pages on religious topics; most of which would remain in New York State. The New York State Temperance Society would print twelve million copies of tracts and pamphlets by 1838. Between 1800 and 1810, the Shakers undertook significant missionary activities, again opening their gospel to the World’s People. Mother Lucy reopened the gospel in 1799 to gain converts from the Second Great Awakening. As the Shakers noted in 1799,

[a]ccordingly about the year 1797, signs of awakening were perceived, and a few small openings began to appear in different places to such as had been in some degree awakened to a sense of their need of salvation. This seemed a prelude to a further opening of the gospel, and excited the attention of Believers.

In 1801, the Shakers sent missionaries to a revival in Pittsford, Vermont. In 1805, Mother Lucy sent missionaries to the Kentucky Revival. This decision would fundamentally change the Shakers. The Shaker missionaries went forth with a letter stating that a Shaker life offered salvation. The revivals drew thousands of people, and

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92 Ibid, 160.
94 Cross, 1982, 214.
95 Graham, 1996, 85; Bishop, 1802-1824, 64-65.
96 Records kept by Order of the Church, 1780-1855, 16-17 (Wednesday, November 13, 1799).
97 Brewer, 1986, 32.
98 We have heard of a work of God among you which works in Diverse operations of his Power’s for which we feel thankful, as we have an Ardent Desire that God would Carry on his own work According to his purposes– we know that God’s work as it respects the Salvation and Redemption of souls to
the Shakers attracted many new converts. However, the opening of the gospel brought with it challenges for the Shakers. The establishment of these new communities was a financial strain on the Eastern villages. An 1812 letter shows the scale of the contribution: "eighteen thousand and ninety five Dollars in money exclusive of waggons, horses, and clothing, besides various kinds of articles and presents of money &c from individuals."  

The rise of Spiritualism marked the latter part of the Second Great Awakening. By the 1830s, American society was readily accepting ‘divine’ signs: “by 1837, it has become habitual for Christians to interpret ‘everything that deeply engages public attention’ as a symbol of the Messiah’s Kingdom.” Spiritualism emerged in this period as a powerful belief system. Spirits were considered mediators between humans and the divine being. The spiritual world, drawing on the works of Swedenborg, was seen as a place of order, often exemplified by representations of other realms dominated by geometric precision. The Spiritualists also drew upon contemporary theories about the use of the environment to reshape the individual. The Spiritualists recognized the

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99 Among the coverts was Richard McNemar, a leader of the Cane Ridge Revival Ahlstrom, 2004, 493; Morse, 1987, 78.
100 Bishop, 1802-1821, 71.
101 Bratt, 1998, 61
102 Cross, 1982, 201.
104 Ibid, 82.
Mormons and Shakers as predecessors, but saw themselves as distinct for their understanding of the ongoing religious functions of spirits.\footnote{As Carroll notes, the Shakers and Spirituals were often very critical of each other, with the Spirituals viewing the Shakers as authoritarian and the Shakers viewing the Spiritualist as materialistic and sensationalist. However, the two were alike in many respects, particularly with regard to their respective emphases on spirit communication. Ibid, 155 & 22.} Starting in March of 1848, a series of mysterious table ‘knockings’ occurred in the home of John Fox. As word spread of the ability of his two daughters, Katie and Margaretta, to communicate with the dead, public interest in the spiritual world grew. Even the Shakers were aware of these rappings and some saw them as symbolic of the growth of spiritual influence. One sees this interest in a letter sent to Sabbathday Lake in which it was noted that several members of the New Lebanon community visited the site and were confident in the spiritual nature of the event.\footnote{A wonderful manifestation. . . ”Manuscript: MeS Box 48. November 10, 1850.} The Shakers keenly observed the development of spiritualism in the Northeastern United States, even bringing mediums into the village.\footnote{Records kept by Order of the Church, 1780-1855, 343 (February 11, 1850); Diary, 1850-1853, and list of members of the Upper family in Canaan, 1850-1853, 30 Sept 1851.} Such was the movement’s appeal, public interest was not diminished when it was discovered the Fox Sisters had engineered the knockings themselves.\footnote{Cross, 1982, 345-346.} Not all agreed with this interest in the spiritual world. In his sermon entitled Modern Necromancy, Butler argued that spiritualism was antithetical to Christian faith: “The whole tenor of scripture is opposed to the idea that the spirits of the departed linger near, and can open communications with, our World.”\footnote{C.M. Butler. Modern Necromancy: A Sermon Preached in Trinity Church, Washington City, April 23, 1854. Washington: G.S. Gideon, Printer, 1854: 4.} Butler suggests that the contemporary spiritualism was the product of human works, particularly when a medium shaped the tenor and tone
So clearly does the communication take its hue and character from the medium, or the person communication through his, that when George Washington, and Benjamin Franklin and Henry Clay, communicated through, or are summoned by, an illiterate medium, they not only utter deplorable nonsense, but they use bad grammar; they spell incorrectly, they write in a most vulgar style.\textsuperscript{110}

However, the Spiritualists argued that these democratized spiritual communications made it the ideal religion for their age.\textsuperscript{111} Spiritualism was attractive because it offered both personal comfort and recalled past revivals.

In this period, the Hudson Valley continued to be the site of conflict. The evangelizing methods of the Methodists were attacked and adherents were labeled traitors and charlatans. There were continuing struggles between Dutch landlords and Yankee ‘tenants.’\textsuperscript{112} In nearby Massachusetts, the Ely and Shay Rebellions marked the region. Originating in issues of public debt and a credit crisis, the post-Revolutionary period saw civil unrest that nearly developed into civil war in the Hill Country of western Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{113} Nearby New Lebanon served as a staging ground for Regulator’s winter march through Stockbridge to Sheffield, and was home to rebellion support as late

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{110} Butler, 1854, 15-16.
\item \textsuperscript{111} Carroll, 1997, 52
\item \textsuperscript{113} John Brooke. “To the Quiet of the People: Revolutionary Settlements and Civic Unrest in Western Massachusetts, 1774-1789.” The William and Mary Quarterly, 38th Serv. Vol. 46. No. 3. (July 1989): 426; Nash, 2005, 399-400.
\end{itemize}
The Regulators were people who refused to pay taxes, opposed the forcible repossession of land, and who forcible closed courts to prevent judgements. Many had been influenced the First Great Awakening. They brought the area of New Lebanon close to civil war in the post-revolutionary period. Gary Nash. The Unknown American Revolution. Toronto: Viking, 2005; Brooke, 1989, 450.

For a more comprehensive history of the Shakers see Stein, 1992 or Brewer 1986.


The Shakers as a Dynamic group: A Brief History

In addition to understanding the American context in the antebellum period, any understanding of how the Shakers sought to bring about God’s Kingdom on Earth must also reflect upon the major changes and shifts that occurred with Shakerism itself. As in the pre-revolutionary period, the antebellum Shakers underwent significant changes that can be denoted by two general eras: the ‘Era of the Founders,’ and the ‘Era of Regulation.’ It is through an understanding of these eras, and the major changes which occurred within each of them, that one can better understand the Shakers as a community. The ‘Era of the Founders’ was marked by the leadership of three early Shaker converts who were directly connected to Mother Ann: Father James Whittaker (Elder 1784-1787), Father Joseph Meacham (Elder 1787-1796), and Mother Lucy Wright (Eldress 1796-1821). Each of the these individuals left their indelible mark on Shakerism. The ‘Era of Regulation’ (1821-1861) saw the introduction of formal regulations and by-laws, the rise of spiritualism marked by Mother Ann’s Work and a plethora of new regulations, and ultimately a reaction against over-regulation. However, it should be noted what follows is not a comprehensive history of the Shakers but a precis of the major figures and events.

Father James’s period of leadership occurred during the critical period following the American Revolution. After Mother Ann’s death in 1784, Father James led the
community for three years. While leader for a relatively short time, under him the Shakers initiated many changes, transforming Shakerism into its more institutionalized form. Father James despised the carnality of the World, and sought to protect his flock from its profaning influence. However, there existed a tension between order and chaos within Shaker communities. He had to contend with a lack of uniformity in Shaker practice and belief, and to cope with Believers who danced naked in the woods, believed in their own immortality, and/or were preparing for immediate ascension into heaven. Father James actively sought to organize the Shakers into a coherent body, considering it central to the Shakers’ survival. The result was that “many violent manifestations of power which had attended the religious exercises of the Believers before the forming of the Community, had become less frequent and gradually faded away.” The leaders that followed Father James built upon the foundation he created. In particular, Father Joseph Meacham’s approach built on the efforts of Father James resulting in the restructuring of the Shakers and their places into a highly organized and complex system.

If Mother Ann was the living embodiment of Shaker belief, Father Joseph Meacham was the master organizer who oversaw not only the establishment of New Lebanon as the exemplar Shaker community but also the standardization of Shaker belief and Shaker places. Chosen over his natural brother, David, and Calvin Harlow as the new Lead following the death of Father James, he established the idea of the Shaker ‘family’

119Proctor-Smith, 1985, 44.
and formal communalism.\textsuperscript{120} When Father Joseph became the leader of the Church in 1787, he was responsible for both the temporal concerns of the community and the spiritual concerns of Believers. He inherited a system with Believers scattered across New England, a situation that made ministration difficult and resulted in backsliding.\textsuperscript{121} To address these issues, Father Joseph sought to create and maintain a spiritual union of men and women living in a consecrated community by drawing upon the idea of the covenant. This idea of a covenant, and its expression as the Earthly Zion, was expressed in many of his writings.

An example of this is Father Joseph’s \textit{A brief collection of matters necessary to be understood and observed in the Church relating chiefly to the giving and establishment of Church Order and of Law in Church Relation}. In this document, he stated that obedience was central to the maintenance of temporal and spiritual order.\textsuperscript{122} He also argued the Ministry retained divine authority as God’s appointed arbitrator of His law and will.\textsuperscript{123} Implicit was the understanding that one must be obedient to one’s spiritual elders. Also clear within Father Joseph’s work is a subjection of temporal concerns to the spiritual.\textsuperscript{124}

In the first Shaker imprint, \textit{A Concise Statement of the Principals of the Only

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\textsuperscript{121}Records kept by Order of the Church. Manuscript: NN Shaker Manuscript Collection Item # 7. 1780-1855:10-11.

\textsuperscript{122}Graham, 1996, 56.

\textsuperscript{123}Meacham, c. 1790, 8.

\textsuperscript{124}Ibid, 9.
\end{footnotesize}
True Church. Father Joseph further articulated the core Shaker beliefs and established the theological basis for all later Shaker works.\textsuperscript{125} This theological text explained that from early in their existence as a distinct community, the Shakers saw the work of God in the World as progressive. They identified two types of revelation in their writing: direct special revelation, and indirect special revelation.\textsuperscript{126} “Ideally, the individual Shaker sought to become a person who “walks and talks” with God, so direct special revelation is the ideal – for then the individual is truly possessed with the Christ Spirit.”\textsuperscript{127} Nevertheless, this was a document profoundly influenced by the religious context in which it was created:

When Meacham set out to explain the Shaker theory, he relied heavily on the “history of redemption” model heralded by George Whitefield, and effectively used by Jonathan Edwards. This approach explained history in terms of biblical events that focused particularly on the Fall and the Atonement.\textsuperscript{128}

This document situated the Shaker beliefs within the broader context of ecclesiastical and dispensational history.\textsuperscript{129} Central to it was a sense that a life in Christ was both rich and full, but required a subjection of the self to the worship of God and rejection of Worldly

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{125}“First Shaker Imprint.” \textit{The Shaker Quarterly}, Vol. II. No. 2. (1962): 144; However as Robinson suggests, this document had limited circulation when compared to later Shaker works. (Robinson, 1893, 32.)
  \item \textsuperscript{126}Direct special revelation refers to a direct communication between God and an individual while \textit{indirect special revelation refers to} when the message is relayed through a third party. Taylor, 1991, 38
  \item \textsuperscript{127}Taylor, 1991, 38.
  \item \textsuperscript{129}Marini, 2001, 148.
\end{itemize}
Following Father Joseph’s death in August 1796, he was succeeded by Mother Lucy, who he had earlier appointed as his successor. Mother Lucy’s leadership from 1796 to 1821 was a period of growth and challenges. The Shakers were strengthened by the departure of malcontents by 1800 and by the Second Great Awakening. Mother Lucy, like Father Joseph, also excelled at organizational strategy and continued the standardization of Shakerism and its places. As Graham writes, “after Meacham’s death, the more radical or emotional elements of Shaker worship gradually were replaced by ‘gifts’ of a more subdued and formal nature, making it less difficult, perhaps, for those not as committed to Shaker theology to live comfortably in the Society.” The Shakers of the 1810s and 1820s were prosperous, and more comfortable with the ways of the World. However, this prosperity brought with it a growing concern about Worldly influence. By the late 1810s and early 1820s, many Shakers were concerned about the superfluousness in the society and its places, including types of ink, gold earrings, and silver pens. Youngs questioned the logic of some prohibitions, which brought him into

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130 “First Shaker Imprint.”, 1962, 145.
133 Graham, 1996, 111
conflict with his elders.\textsuperscript{137} Still, such admonishments did not prevent the Shakers from incorporating new technologies, and the early nineteenth century saw the introduction of many new technologies. In May 1809, the Society used its first Carding Machine and purchased a Richardson leather splitting machine in 1813.\textsuperscript{138} 1813 also saw the introduction of the circular saw to the Shaker mills.\textsuperscript{139} The Shakers also continued adapting their environment for their use. On November 7, 1816, Lyon notes the diversion of a brook into a specially constructed aqueduct to bring water into their barns.\textsuperscript{140} This era also saw the rise of the printed word as a valuable means to communicated Shaker ideas and to refute the attacks of both apostates and hostile members of the World. Indeed, by Mother Lucy’s death in 1821, the Shakers had transformed from an oral-based community to one in which the written word was prominent.\textsuperscript{141}

Mother Lucy’s death marked the beginning of the ‘Era of Regulation, which saw increased numbers of internal crises despite increased acceptance by the World’s People.\textsuperscript{142} The era had high apostasy rates among the male members and significant internal debates over the best means to live in the World.\textsuperscript{143} But, by the 1830s, the

\textsuperscript{137}Ibid, March 19th [1818]
\textsuperscript{138}[Elder Sisters - New Lebanon]. Domestic journal of important occurrences kept for the elders sisters at New Lebanon. Manuscript: OClWhi V B 60. 1780-1860: 55; Robinson, 1893, 47.
\textsuperscript{139}“History of the Church of Mt. Lebanon, N.Y. No. 11” The Manifesto. Vol. XX, No. 5. (May, 1890): 99.
\textsuperscript{140}Benjamin Lyon. Journal, concerning events in the family of the second order, 1816-1818. Manuscript: DLC Item 43 Shaker Collection, 1816-1818: November 7, 1816.
\textsuperscript{141}Marini, 2001, 133.
\textsuperscript{142}On February 8, 1821, Youngs noted the following in his journal: “This night; after midnight, morning of the 8\textsuperscript{th} we are awaked from our sleep with Solemn News! Mother is no more! O sorrowful, sorrowful, we are deprived of our last and only parent in this World…” Youngs, 1815-1823, February 8, 1821.
\textsuperscript{143}Savulis, 2003, 169.
public’s view of the Shakers was becoming more sympathetic. The development of many
reform movements marked this period in American history, such as anti-slavery,
prostitution reform, temperance, and anti-poverty.\textsuperscript{144} Institutions such as the American
Tract Society (established in 1825) sought to promote a Christian way of life. The
Shakers, with their industry, temperance, and reputation for honesty and respectable
behaviour were seen as models in an increasingly modernized society as were their
places. This understanding by the World’s People was bolstered by a ready supply of
Shaker pamphlets, books, and guides.\textsuperscript{145} Even apostates of this period acknowledged the
positive attributes of Shaker communities.\textsuperscript{146}

Increased acceptance by the World caused a paradoxical situation. By this period
the Shakers were gaining more public acceptance, with the World esteeming their
products and piety.\textsuperscript{147} As the World’s People actively sought Shaker products, the
Shakers modified their material culture to reflect Worldly desires. Starting in the 1830s,
Believers were purchasing silk and developing ‘fancy goods’ for sale.\textsuperscript{148} Shaker villages
also became tourist attractions with visitors arriving in ever-increasing numbers. In 1829,
the Lead Ministry issued a Circular warning about preoccupation with the World,
implicitly arguing that there was a need to protect the Shaker Zion.\textsuperscript{149} By the late 1830s,
there was a growing spiritual crisis, that found its ultimate expression in the era known as

\textsuperscript{144}Wacker, 2003, 199.
\textsuperscript{145}De Wolfe, 2002, 137-141.
\textsuperscript{146}Ibid, 139.
\textsuperscript{147}Proctor-Smith, 1985, 175.
\textsuperscript{149}Ibid, 104-105.
Mother Ann’s Work in the 1830s and 1840s. The Shakers attempted to maintain a sense of imagined community through the creation of simultaneous meetings such as one held on Sunday March 1, 1835. Nevertheless, by the end of the 1830s, alternative interpretations of how best to live a Shaker life were overwhelming the leadership, coming to a head with the spiritual revival of 1837.

One of the most formative periods for the Shakers, and the one with which many people typically associate with Shaker worship, life, belief, and community design, was the time known as Mother Ann’s Work:

In 1837 a new era commenced as the windows of heaven and the avenues of the spirit World were opened. Gifts of visions, of revelations, of inspiration and of spiritual songs were among the heavenly treasures that were showered upon the Believers. Economic factors, including an economic panic in 1838 and poor harvests in 1834 and 1837, demographic changes in the community, and social changes all contributed to the revival. In many ways, this revival most explicitly articulated the Shaker relationship with God; there were increased regulations, stipulations, and spirit messages about the need to ensure that right actions were undertaken by the Shakers as God’s Chosen people. It was also a reaction to the increasing affluence and wealth of the community and a call to return to a purer form of Shakerism. It was the period in which the clearest

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150 Giles B. Avery. Historical Scetches or a Record of Remarkable events With Remarks [and] Illustrations Kept By Giles B. Avery, New Lebanon Manuscript: DCL Shaker Collection Item # 53. [1832]-1855: 8.


152 Brewer, 1984, 47.
statements were made concerning the need to abide by covenantal obligations, and ensure the protection of God’s places. However, the revival was divisive and was ultimately rejected.

Starting in Watervliet, this spiritual revival resulted in profound changes in Shakerism and Shaker Communities. Philemon Stewart wrote in September 1837 that there had been visions at Watervliet that were “striking and solemn.”¹⁵³ Word of the visions spread quickly. Benjamin Lyon noted in the Second Family Journal on December 1, 1837 that “The Elder Brother Joseph Hodson of Watervliet comes here for a visit he relates some of the visions that girls have seen at Watervliet it is Butiful I think.”¹⁵⁴ Lyon wrote at the next Sabbath that “the new maner of labour the gift and Power of God flow in abundance.”¹⁵⁵ He recorded the following Sabbath meeting included instructions on how to labour in the new manner of worship and that these instructions continued at several subsequent Meetings.¹⁵⁶ By the 1830s, a sense of disconnect had developed between the third generation of Shakers and the founders.¹⁵⁷ The revival reconnected to the voices of past Shakers, many of whom were long dead.¹⁵⁸

While spiritualism was an integral aspect of Shaker belief, during Mother Ann’s

¹⁵³Philemon Stewart. A Monthly Journal of such transactions as is and may hereafter be consider of some importance to be kept. [June 22, 1830-December 1837]. Manuscript: DLC Item # 46 Shaker Collection. September 1837: 148.
¹⁵⁵Ibid, December 3, 1837.
¹⁵⁶Ibid, December 10, 1837; December 24, 1837; & December 31, 1837.
¹⁵⁷Avery, [1832]-1855, 64-65 (June 11, 1837); Koomler, 2000, 154; Promey, 1993, 18.
¹⁵⁸Examples include documents such as spirit messages from Mother Ann (Mother Ann’s Word to the Elders in Zion. Manuscript: DCL Item # 131 Shaker Collection. 1842), and Father William (Words of Father William to the Writer. Manuscript: DCL Item # 69 Shaker Collection. November 25, 1841)
Work, it was also a threatening and potentially destabilizing force. Only certain members of the community received these spiritual messages, which caused general consternation and dissension. While spiritual ‘instruments’ existed throughout the history of Shakerism, their role obtained great authority during the era of Spiritual manifestations. The challenge of individual inspiration was that it often disregarded any established authority but, for individual spiritualism to have any significant influence, it required the support of the community. Initially, the Ministry did not restrict the instruments, but intervened when the spirit messages started to speak to temporal matters within the community. Rather than reject the spiritualist movement, the Shaker leadership attempted to direct it through the use of official instruments. The main tool used by the Ministry to review spiritual gifts were ‘Spiritual Spectacles’ which were given to them by a spirit messenger to determine which spirit messages were acceptable. Savulis argues that Mother Ann’s Work was used by the Ministry to “weed-out unBelievers” and increase union within the community, while censoring potential unflattering or disruptive messages. A letter from Robert White to an Elder reflects such a concern with unregulated messages. Following the receipt of a particularly

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159 Promey, 1993, 42.
160 Ibid, XV.
161 Instruments were individual members of the community who received messages from the spirit world. The Shaker leadership would eventually appoint official instruments during the period of Mother Ann’s work. The messages, known as spirit messages, ranged in function from simply expressing greetings to providing instructions. Some messages including speaking in tongues.
162 Cross, 1982, 206.
164 Promey, 1993, 44-45. Spiritual Spectacle referred to a spiritual gift which enabled the Ministry to determine what gift were authentic.
violent and graphic spiritual gift, he recorded the following:

Now, to pretend that the Saviour who as the head and lead called Mother and the Elders out of war and the spirit of it, and at the same time called John Patten or any one else to be a partaker in blood and carnage, to kill slay and destroy his fellow creatures, is horrid to my feelings. And while I thus express them, I feel not to rebuke an Elder but to entreat him to look and examine, to let the candle of the Lord shine to the searching out this insidious spirit that I believe has crept in and so dim’d the brightness of that pure peaceable Gospel; which Gospel if it had been faithfully lived up to, would at this day made its professors powerful instruments in bringing mankind to a sense of that true Christian Love, that suffers wrong, rather than to do it.166

This problem was noted in the official record, indicating that some Believers were exposed to false spirits or imperfect inspiration.167 This sentiment is reflected in one spirit message, in which Believers were directed to be obedient to their leadership.168

Mother Ann’s Work destabilized the Shakers as a society. While in some ways it served to reinforce communal identity and a return to traditional values, it also alienated many Shakers skeptical of the veracity of such gifts. After 1840, when the nature of the gifts became more esoteric, some Believers began to question their authenticity.169

Mother Ann’s Work placed many stresses on the Shaker leadership.170 The era exacerbated tensions between those who advocated structured worship and hierarchy and those who embraced the gifts. Both groups saw their activities as divinely inspired.171

Even Elder Rufus Bishop of the Ministry questioned some of the fervor, stating “to be

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167 Records kept by Order of the Church, 1780-1855, 199-201 (November 20, 1842).
170 Taylor, 1991, P 54-55
honest about the matter I think there was rather too much of the wind, fire, and earthquake to satisfy Believers who have had a long & fruitful travel.”¹⁷² The Ministry had few options available to them. If they condemned the spirit messages, they would contradict one of the oldest elements of Shaker belief, but the gifts were potentially destabilizing. Spiritual gifts were sometimes used to further particular individual agendas, resulting in power struggles between different groups within the community.¹⁷³ Even Calvin Green was caught in this struggle. Green expressed concern about some of the manifestations and Stewart’s role as an instrument. As a result, Green was singled out for criticism by the visionists.¹⁷⁴ Green’s autobiography includes a warning not to question spiritual gifts lightly, so that he queried the veracity of the visionists is significant.¹⁷⁵ By his questioning Philemon Stewart’s and other visionists’ gifts, Green was himself made to confess “his wrongs in feeling & acting against Order & government.”¹⁷⁶

Many instruments were preoccupied with a desire for ‘unrealistic perfectionism’ by trying to insist on the regulation of all life in and through the places of the Shaker Community.¹⁷⁷ This understanding of Shakerism was openly rejected by the community starting in the 1840s. By the late 1840s, the Shaker spiritual revival, along with the rules and regulations articulated in that period, were waning. The Shakers reintroduced

¹⁷²Stein, 1992,169
¹⁷³Savulis, 2003, 173.
¹⁷⁵Green, 1859, [33].
¹⁷⁶As quoted in Stein, 1992, 187.
prohibited ‘Worldly’ goods such as tea and coffee.\textsuperscript{178} Even at New Lebanon, the spiritualist rituals disappeared and were forgotten in relatively short order.\textsuperscript{179} In 1847, the last ‘official’ spirit messages were received.\textsuperscript{180} In part due to the efforts of Seth Wells, by 1850 the Ministry had relaxed the spirits laws created during Mother Ann’s work and eventually withdrew them completely.\textsuperscript{181} While documents continued to be produced throughout the nineteenth century drawing on the ideas and laws of the revival, included an 1859 document entitled \textit{Divine Judgements Law to the Children of the New Creation of God} that argued for a return to the spiritual laws given in the period, by the middle of the 1850s there was an outright rejection of the period’s excesses.\textsuperscript{182}

Contemporary events occurring in the wider American context informed Mother Ann’s Work. As Believers engaged more with the larger American culture, the mid-century American sense of equality had a greater impact on the Shakers. All this occurred simultaneously with an internal crisis of authority resulting from remoteness from Mother Ann and intensified, as ever more young people left the community, by a diminished leadership pool.\textsuperscript{183} This situation was noted by Isaac Youngs who, in 1846, observed that a meeting of the middle aged, “the Elders spoke of the order of union concerning the order in which we are placed, male & female.- - [and] Henceforth we are to be more changeable in our order & not consider ourselves to be so fixed or stationary as had

\textsuperscript{178} Records kept by Order of the Church, 1780-1855, 599 (Review of 1855)
\textsuperscript{179} Stein, 1992, 197.
\textsuperscript{180} Proctor-Smith, 1985, 191.
\textsuperscript{182} Divine Judgements Law to the Children of the New Creation of God. 1859. Manuscript: DCL Item 172 Shaker Collection.
\textsuperscript{183} Promey, 1993, 57.
formerly been the manner.”184 This was undoubtedly a deliberate effort to account for the decreasing membership.

They were also increasingly comfortable in the World’s ways.185 There was still some nostalgia for the past in the face of an uncertain future.186 Growing pessimism replaced the religious enthusiasms of the 1830s and 1840s.187 On August 8, 1852, the Elder Rufus Bishop, leader Elder in the Ministry, died.188 The era was also one of increased departures, which was noted within the Church records:

The most serious thing that has arrested our attention the past year, is the lamentable Apostacy of so many that have fallen off from our number, and gone to perdition. This unavoidably brings a cloud of gloom over the mind of such as desire the welfare of Zion [and] the increase of the work of God.189

Spiritualism remained an important element of the Shaker faith, and the Shakers continued to pay attention to the spiritualist movement through the United States. The Shakers reaffirmed their belief in spiritual process and fluidity.190 As they wrote in 1856, “This order of people originated in spiritual and Divine revelation from the heavenly orders above; and they have been continually supported, and have advanced in various

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185 Stein, 1992, 200.
186 Brewer, 1986, 137.
188 Diary, 1850-1853, and list of members of the Upper family in Canaan. Manuscript: LOC Shaker Collection#39. 1850-1853.
189 Records kept by Order of the Church, 1780-1855, 452 (Review of 1853).
degrees, by an influx of Divine revelations and heavenly ministrations with increasing light, adapted to their state, up to the present time.” Nevertheless, between 1851 and 1856, the Shakers noted that “the form of the spiritual manifestations that took place within the boundary of our Society... presented nothing remarkably new, as worthy of special notice.” This did not end the spirit gifts: as late as 1882, Shakers were receiving spirit drawings.

The end of the antebellum period was one of great prosperity for the Shakers at New Lebanon. By this time, the Society at New Lebanon owned about 6,000 acres of land, much of it in Massachusetts. In 1861, the community was renamed Mount Lebanon with the establishment of its own post office. The name ‘Shaker’ itself had become a byword in the mid-nineteenth century for their quality merchandise and honest business practices. Richard Bushnell, in correspondence with the Ministry, outlined the economic strength of the North Family at the time of his retirement:

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194Evans, , 1859, 40.
195Koomler, 2000, 8.
When I retired from the Eldership of the N. Family I had under my charge Funds amounting to fifty-five thousand two hundred and seventy five dollars ($55,275) exclusive of what might have been in the hands of the Trustees, of which I have no account.

The above sum of $55,275 consisted of investments secured by Mortgages in real estate in different places together with R Road Bonds, Deposits in Bank, Cash on hand, and Debts then due, A list of which is enclosed herewith.¹⁹⁶

What is interesting is the clear investment of Shaker money in the outside World.

However, business was a continuing challenge for the Shakers. The Shakers found they were often in competition with each other.¹⁹⁷ The Shakers noted that remaining economically competitive was often expensive and required the combined resources of several families. To meet such costs New Lebanon even had to approach other communities for support.¹⁹⁸ The Shakers also lamented the continued reliance on and use of the legal system.¹⁹⁹ In 1861, the Shakers were also keenly aware of the increased tensions between the northern and southern states, writing “The papers abound with distressing account of disturbances between the North and South, about the Slavery question . . . ”²⁰⁰ Little were they aware of the immediate and lasting impact the war

¹⁹⁹“This law business is very expensive disagreeable business for Believers to engage in. Yet it seems necessary many times, besides to maintain our rights, but we think the less that Believers have to do with law the better.” Ministry (New Lebanon). “Beloved gospel Ministry.” Letters - New Lebanon (1854-1856). Manuscript: OClWhi IV A 41. April 15, 1855: 1.
²⁰⁰Records kept by Order of the Church, 1780-1855, 556 (June 1854).
would have on Shakerism. The Shakers being blessed wealth before the war would be faced with decline in the post Civil War era.201

A Changing Time and Place

The antebellum period was one of reorientation for the American people in many aspects of their daily lives.202 Revivalism was fused with politics; as American republicanism promoted universal equality, revivals called for the one thousand year reign of Christ.203 Utopian belief in the perfectability of the human condition was fused with Jacksonian democracy. The antebellum period was one of change and challenge, and the antebellum Shakers, and their narratives of place, must be understood within this dynamic context. Still, throughout the period, the Shakers, in their effort to live in the World but not be of it, drew upon a powerful narrative: a Covenant with God. The efforts to best live a life dedicated to God, and express this in physical form, would be a major point of the Shaker discourse throughout the antebellum period, and it is to a discussion of the covenant that we will now turn.

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201Brewer, 1986, 86.
203Cross, 1982, 79.
CHAPTER FIVE
COVENANTS AND COMMUNITY:
A HOUSE FOUNDED ON A ROCK

High on a rock, the wise man marks his plan,
Its deep foundations, closely he would scan;
Though gentle zephyrs breathe through summer skies,
He knows that storms wide wasting may arise;
On solid base his building rises fair,
And points its turrets through the ambient air.
With tranquil joy, his eyes delighted, greet
The beauteous fabric furnished and complete;
In conscious safety makes it his abode,
His duty done, he leaves the rest with God.
But soon dark clouds o’erspread the troubled sky,
And soon is heard the voice of tempest high;
Deep rolls the thunder, rains in torrents pour.
And floods tumultuous beat with deafening roar.
Floods, rain, nor thunder, nor rude tempest’s shock,
Can harm the house – ‘tis founded on a Rock.

Not so the simpleton who built on Sand,
And wrought his labor with penurious hand;
‘Midst howling tempests, and loud thunder’s roar.
His house – it vanish’d and was seen no more.¹

Introduction: A Shaker Meta-Narrative

As previously noted, Shaker life was structured by a powerful meta-narrative concerning the Covenant between God and the Shakers, His Chosen People in His Promised Land. This narrative, which is profoundly geographical due to its intertwining of people with place, was not static. It served as the basis for the Shaker discourses concerning the most appropriate way of living in the World, while being ‘not of the world.’ The nature and relationship of this narrative in Shaker life has not been

thoroughly examined, in part because ‘Covenant’ was used by the Shakers in two different, albeit interrelated, ways. To the Shakers, Covenant meant both a legal document signed by adherents, similar to other religious-political documents such as the Mayflower Compact and the Puritan covenants of New England, as well as the relationship (and obligations) that the community had with and to God, similar to the religious covenants of Noah, Abraham, and Moses. While the Shaker religious-legal covenant was similar in form and in function to other regional covenant documents, the spiritual covenant was a profound demonstration of individual subjugation to greater religious and community needs. This spiritual covenant was much more than either a written or oral contract between a people and their God. It was also an origin story and a narrative that gave meaning to individual and collective life. As such, it was necessarily a profoundly spatialised narrative, expressed through the ideas of ‘Promised Land’ and ‘Chosen People.’ While the covenantal narrative served to shape place, place itself was not merely a physical entity on which meaning was imposed. As discussed in Chapter 2, narrative, place, and identity are inseparable. Thus, the antebellum Shakers use of both spiritual and written covenants demonstrates how the covenantal narrative can shape place and, in turn, how specific places can influence the expression of that relationship in the temporal world. Further, this narrative of a spiritual Covenant was a foundation for Shaker life.

**The Covenantal Narrative**

The covenantal narrative has its origins in the account of the experience of the Jewish people in ancient Israel. As Llywelyn argues, individuals have two key
relationships: with places, and with others (environmental, human, and divine). A covenant integrates these two concepts into a coherent narrative of belonging. Within the Old Testament, the land implies a relationship with God. This is clear in the biblical account of the covenant established between Abraham and God:

I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.

Here there is a sense of permanence; the land shall eternally belong to the people of Abraham. It was also through the land that the covenant was either to be maintained or destroyed:

The Bible may be understood as the Israelite reflection on what it means to belong to the land [of] God. The land is in itself the context, the sacrament and the embodiment of Yahweh’s covenant with his people. . . . Faithlessness to the terms of the covenant leads inexorably to landlessness, and the fidelity to blessing. Only under conditions of recognition of radical contingency and dependence on God’s providence is it possible for the nation of Israel to continue to receive the blessing of the land of Israel.

Thus, while the places of ancient Israel, including land, were regarded as a gift from God and integral to the community’s identity and survival, fulfillment of the covenant was tied to righteous behaviour. The loss of the faith and acts of transgression would result in

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3 Genesis 17: 7-8.
4 Llywelyn, 1999: 27.
the loss of land which in turn would result in the loss of identity. Exile was conceived as the greatest punishment. So important was maintaining the land under Israelite control, that selling or trading the lands of ancient Israel was an act of impiety. The idea of covenant was subsequently adopted by a variety of groups, and implicit within their narratives of identity is the affirmation of the relationship between people, place, and God. Ricoeur, writing on the Jewish experience, notes that the covenant, as a narrative, has powerful resonance: “It seems . . . that something specific, something unique, is said about Yahweh and about Yahweh’s relations with the people of Israel because it is said in the form of a narrative, of a story that recounts the events of deliverance in the past.” These narratives are both deeply spiritual statements and powerful tools for community organization, delimiting, for example, which people belong in particular places, and which do not.

In distinguishing the boundaries between a ‘Chosen People’ and all others, a covenantal narrative fosters a community’s sense of identity. Within a covenantal understanding of reality a people must constitute themselves as distinct to endure. Lutz argues that distinction can be accomplished through the development of a series of foundational texts which articulate a common set of narratives. These narratives outline the uniqueness of a community and its shared history, places, and destiny, and

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5 Hillers, 1969, 79.


incorporate individuals by imparting a sense of belonging to something greater.8

Typically these narratives convey special privilege: God has blessed this group over all others.

The privilege must be earned. The ‘Chosen People’ must recognize and obey obligations, especially fidelity. The importance of faithfulness to a higher power is echoed in political treaties contemporary to the writing of the Old Testament covenants. Ancient Hittite treaties are strikingly similar to the early biblical covenants. In these documents, the lesser party must obey the regulations of the greater power or suffer grave misfortune:

Should Duppi-Tessub not honor these words of the treaty and the oath, may these gods of the oath destroy Duppi-Tessub, together with his person, his wife, his son, his grandson, his house, his lands and together with everything that he owns.9

A preoccupation with fidelity is intimately part of monotheistic covenants. God represents the ultimate power, and requires obedience of his people; misfortune befalls any violator. As Schwartz notes,

What is at stake in the monotheistic covenant— with its demand of exclusive loyalty to the sovereign, its insistence on his complete possession of his subjects— seems to be the very identity of the community itself, whose fragile borders can be maintained only through the threat of such unimaginable (albeit luridly imagined) curses. The sermons of Puritan preachers vividly describing the hellfire awaiting the reprobate were intended to strike terror, indeed, and conformity into the hearts of the congregation.10

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9As quoted in Hillers, 1969.
The protection of place is central to these acts of fidelity. As Schwartz suggests with her term ‘fragile borders,’ it is the protection of the place and its boundaries that is integral to the survival of the covenant, to God’s ‘Chosen People’, and to His ‘Promised Land.’ The obligations of community members, designed to ensure they remain the ‘Chosen People’ in God’s places, may be purely ideological, in the sense of remaining in the realm of ideas, or they may be stated through written obligations that bind the chosen people to particular lands.11 It is the duty of community members to ensure that God’s people and places are protected from transgression. Frymer-Kensky argues that the writings of the Old Testament clearly illustrate the importance of preventing transgressions and maintaining purity: “The land cannot be given to those who are unworthy, and the land cannot continue to be occupied by those who are unworthy and defile her.”12 Thus, God’s earthly kingdom must be marked off from the profane world that surrounds and possibly threatens it, either through the creation of clear property boundaries or through ritualized activity.

As Akenson notes, the etymology of these biblical works is less important than how they were and continue to be understood.13 Many antebellum groups understood biblical works literally and considered them expressions of God’s divine word. As one antebellum commentator noted, the properties of a covenant were eternal, divine, and

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11 Hillers, 1987; Hillers 1969
perfect. It was also understood as how individuals could be saved, and become one of God’s chosen people living in his promised land. For many more groups, including secular and ethno-nationalist groups such as the Hutterites, biblical writings were integral to their beliefs, shaping both social and cosmological ideas. By drawing upon biblical ideas, groups such as the Israelites (and today the Israelis), the Afrikaners, the Puritans, and the Shakers, were able to develop an enduring political and social formation, the covenantal community. The Mormons, in particular, have been identified with the idea of covenant, and its implication for social action, land, the Sabbath, and communal identity. Indeed, the American sense of destiny has links to the covenantal narrative and the idea of a ‘promised land’ for a ‘chosen people.’

American community identity has roots in the ideas of ‘people’, and ‘covenant’ expounded within Protestant writings of the Reformation. The Reformation was marked by a rejection of traditional Catholic hierarchies and the popular desire for greater personal connection to God. In essence, for Protestant reformers such as Calvin, the Reformation was a Christian revival, with an emphasis on a ‘purer’ form of spirituality.

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This included a reexamination of scripture for new models of common life.\textsuperscript{20} The Reformation resulted in new social and religious perspectives on the world and on Christianity, particularly with regard to the development of new church communities.\textsuperscript{21} A stronger community focus found expression in the renewed use of covenants for community development. By 1600, it was standard practice in Europe for a Protestant church to establish itself through a written covenant signed by community members.\textsuperscript{22} This revitalization of covenants on the part of the Protestant communities provided the basis for constructing and reinforcing narratives about both secular and religious collective identity in North America.\textsuperscript{23}

In America, the idea of covenantal community also has its origins in Thomas More’s \textit{Utopia} (1516). While More’s utopia was not particularly reflective of a religious creed, the idea of America as the site for utopias was a powerful theme that was widely adopted.\textsuperscript{24} As noted previously, what differed in and after More’s book was the elimination of the need for divine intervention to create God’s Kingdom on earth: the task could be accomplished through human effort. Among early colonial settlers, America was seen as a \textit{tabula rasa} where humanity could create a perfect moral order with perfect moral freedom, a place where the Kingdom of God on Earth could be


\textsuperscript{23}Schwartz, 1997, 6.

\textsuperscript{24} Lecoq and Schaer, 2000, 66.
Implicit in this belief is a new covenant between the American people and God:

At the heart of our culture are the beliefs that Americans are a chosen people; that they have a manifest (or latent) destiny to lead the world to the millennium; that their democratic-republican institutions, their bountiful natural resources, and their concept of the free and morally responsible individual operate under a body of higher moral laws (to transgress which is to threaten our destiny) and that the Judeo-Christian personal and social ethic (especially in the formulation described by Max Weber as “the Protestant ethic” and called by recent generations “the success myth,” “the work ethic,” and “the American Dream”) causes the general welfare to thrive by allowing the greatest possible free play and equal opportunity to each individual to fulfill his or her potential.

This sense of national destiny has undergone many transformations but a sense of national destiny remains an integral part of the American ethos.

Covenanting, the act of profession to a covenant, was an integral aspect of community formation in early America. The idea of the covenant is important, because, as Schwartz states, “[i]ts narratives describe forging peoples, and it offers multiple visions of what might be meant by ‘a people’ . . . a group with a common deity and cultic practices, a population who hold a territory in common, a nation with a bureaucracy, a kinship group, an exiled community united by a common literature.” As Wentz argues, ancient Israel, and its narrative of covenant, was used as the prototype for many North

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26 McLoughlin, 1978, XIV
27 Elazar, 1994, 1; See also Peter Bukleley. *The Gospel Covenant; or, the Covenant of Grace Opened*. London: Printed by Matthew Simmons, 1651.
American settlement projects, particularly by the Puritans. Many other religious groups came to the new world to establish communities where both civil and religious orders were subjugated to God and His Kingdom. Drawing upon the covenantal narrative, these early communities sought to express their renewed relationship in written and oral formats. The earliest North American written covenants were found in the early Puritan communities who imported the ideas from England. This trend of using both oral and written covenants for community establishment and development was revived following the close of the Revolution in many parts of the newly formed United States, when the secularism of the eighteenth century Enlightenment was replaced by neo-Calvinist ideas about science, society, and religion, due in part to the belief that the success of the Revolution marked the beginning of the end time. These post-revolutionary changes also caused a reconceptualization and a revitalization of the covenant narrative. An example of this reconceptualization was the Mormon covenant (1830), in which human participation became integral to the fulfillment of the covenant.

The idea of a people set apart requires a place in which they can exist, protected from the undue influence of others. The ‘Chosen People’ move not only through time, but also through specific and bounded places. A covenanted people is not only a group

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30 Wentz, 1990, 192.
31 Llywelyn, 1999, 37.
32 Elazar, 1994, 4.
34 Akenson, 1991, 29
apart, but also a group that simultaneously belongs to covenantal places.\textsuperscript{35} It is in these places that a covenanted people can confirm their relationship with God.\textsuperscript{36} Although biblical narratives are foundational, the relationship between the people and their places is dynamic. Transgression and deviance within these places can lead to their loss, a narrative vividly exemplified in the expulsion from Eden. Protecting sacred places from external (and thus profaning) influences, required constant vigilance, resulting in demands for unity, integration, and purity. Within antebellum America, a plethora of documents was created to define how best to protect covenanted communities.

**The Shaker Community**

Among those created, the Shaker covenant documents are notable for their number, variety, negotiated nature and sophistication. The antebellum writings of the Shakers reflected themes of unity, integration, and purity on a variety of scales. These ranging from the individual body, to the land and possessions of the community, to the whole of the community itself.

Central to the Shaker way of life were the ideas of ‘Church,’ community, and separation from the World’s People. In the antebellum period, protecting the Shaker community rested upon four interrelated principles: Virgin Purity, Confession of Sin, Christian Communism, and Separation from the World.\textsuperscript{37} *Virgin purity*, expressed though

\textsuperscript{35} Schwartz, 1997, 39


celibacy (abstinence), is a core precept of Shaker belief. The Shakers believe that intimacy between Adam and Eve was the original sin. Thus, to return to the Edenic state of God’s Kingdom, the body must be protected from carnality. However, before he or she can live in physical (sexual) purity, a Shaker must confess his or her sins to a community elder. Shakers sought to remove profane thoughts, words, and deeds prior to entering God’s kingdom. Once a member of the community, Shakers lived in a state of union defined by Christian communism that allowed all Believers to share in spiritual and temporal blessings. Physical separation from the rest of the world was necessary to protect the community from unwanted worldly influences.\(^{38}\) Worldly distractions weakened the bond between the Believer and the Believer’s duties to the heavenly kingdom. One of the earliest articulations of Shaker theology to examine these ideas was John Dunlavy’s Manifesto, written in 1818.\(^{39}\) A central theme was that the ‘Chosen People’ of God, the Shakers, must be separated from the profane existence of the world. This separation, Dunlavy argued, is easily discernable by all:

\(^{38}\)Hinds, 1961, 87.

\(^{39}\)The full title of the work is The Manifesto or A Declaration of the Doctrine and Practice of The Church of Christ, but it is more commonly known as the Manifesto. Originally written in 1818 (reprinted 1847) by John Dunlavy, a former Presbyterian Minister who converted to Shakerism, it is considered by many Shaker Scholars to be the definitive work on Shaker theology. It served to recast Shaker theology into the mode of nineteenth century protestant works. (John Dunlavy. The Manifesto or A Declaration of the Doctrine and Practice of The Church of Christ. New York: Reprinted by Edward O. Jenkins, 1847; Mary Richmond. Shaker Literature: A Bibliography. Vol. 1. Hancock: Shaker Community Inc., 1977: 72-73.; Stein, 1992-74-75.)
This discriminating line is so manifest that the world can see it, and
discern the people of God from the world, and know that they are not of
them nor of their order; that they have \textit{put off the old man with his deeds},
and have forsaken the world for Christ’s shake, No matter if the world call
them devils, or impostors and deceivers, as they did with their master, they
know them, and can discover that they have gone away from them.\footnote{Dunlavy, 1847, 305.}

Key to this passage is the idea that there must be a clear, visible distinction between
God’s people and their places, and the World’s people and their places. This idea of the
separation of God’s people and the world was reiterated within Calvin Green and Seth Y.
Wells’ \textit{A Summary View of the Millennial Church} (1823), in which themes of
segregation from the world and integration of the individual into the Church are
combined into a coherent and articulate theology further exemplifying why the ‘true
Church of Christ’ is necessarily separated from the world:

\begin{quote}
To constitute a true church of Christ, there must necessarily be a union of
faith, of motives and of interest, in all the members who compose it. There
must be “one body and one bread;” \footnote{Green and Wells, 1823, 51.} [1 Cor. X. 17] and nothing short of
this union in all things, both spiritual and temporal, can constitute a true
church, which is the body of Christ.
\end{quote}

The Shakers were called upon to labour for unified Shaker places while protecting them
from the profaning (outside) world.

In order to bring about the union of Christian Communalism as expressed by
Shaker teachings, individual Shakers sought to integrate their corporal bodies into a
greater spiritual and temporal community. Shaker bodies became part of a greater

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\footnote{Green and Wells, 1823, 51.}
‘consecrated interest’ for the establishment and development of God’s Kingdom on Earth. The bodies of Shakers became a component of a series of integrated and nested Shaker places, and these bodies were places that required the greatest protection. Douglas demonstrates that the boundaries of the body, particularly of the female body, are often correlated with the boundaries of a society. She maintains that real or perceived threats to the society are mirrored in a preoccupation with protecting and sanctifying the physical body. In the various written Shaker covenants, this relationship between the body and the Church is articulated. Shaker covenants sanctified not only material commodities such as goods and property, but also the body, soul, and the labour of a believer. This theme is reflected in the 1796 Covenant in several sections. As the Covenant states,

"[a]ll the members are likewise Equally holden according to their abilities to support one Joint Interest in union in Conformity to the order and government . . . Therefore it is our faith never to bring debt or blame against the Church or each other, for any Interest or Services we should bestow to the Joint interest of the Church, But Covenanted to freely give and Contribute our time and Talents, as Brethren and sisters, for the mutual good one of another and other Charitable uses, according to the order of the Church"

This commitment was seen to provide the basis for a new society, with new places, dedicated to the service of God. This society would, in turn, seek to recreate the

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42 Schwartz, 1997, 72; Douglas, Purity and Danger, 124

43 The 1796 covenant was the first written covenant. Earlier oral covenants were reported used, by claims by apostates necessitated the development of a more ‘legal’ document.

authentic relationship that once existed between human beings and God. In the process, it was hoped that a redefined spatial relationship between humans and God would be created. Brother William Leonard, writing nearly sixty years after the initial establishment of the covenant, illustrates how God and a covenantal relationship served as a fundamental guide for the Shakers:

As the Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing hold all things in common, and enter into a Christian compact of full consecration, in all things, temporal as well as spiritual, we are often called upon to present the example and testimony of Jesus, to prove that he made this requirement of his followers; and as we profess to take him for our pattern and guide, it is just that these requests should be complied with.

This quotation also suggests an important, yet often neglected, aspect of the Shaker covenant: it was conceived in both temporal and spiritual forms.

The Spiritual Covenant and the Temporal Covenant

While the Shaker covenant is most commonly understood as a written legal document copied for every family, the spiritual covenant that informed it was deemed superior by the Shakers. The written covenant was a temporal, and therefore incomplete, representation of the spiritual covenant. The Shakers, in a 1829 written exposition on their Covenant, reaffirmed the paramountcy of the spiritual covenant:

Altho the real bond of union [and] agreement among true believers is invisible [and] unknown to the rest of mankind; yet as there is an outward [and] visible form [and] order in their association, as a church, and as this visible form is founded on certain civil and religious rights, established and maintained by the civil institutions of our country, and intelligible to all, it becomes necessary that all such articles of association as are in any manner connected with their civil rights, should be known [and] properly understood by all concerned: hence the necessity of a written Church Covenant.47

In this statement, the spiritual nature of the Shaker Church is reiterated. While the central bond of Shakers is the spiritual covenant, the church is recognized as existing in the temporal world. Thus, it must be protected through temporal means, notably a written (legal) covenant. Both the spiritual covenant and the temporal covenants drew upon two key themes: binding one’s self to a life of service to God and subjugating one’s self to the rules and orders of His Kingdom. These themes are reflected in other Shaker texts. In the 1810 Testimony of Christ’s Second Appearance, Wells clearly states that obedience to the commandments of God, as provided by his leaders on earth, demonstrates an individual’s love and respect for God.48 Wells would later argue that the covenant, in the context of a Shaker community, obligated members to subject themselves to the regulations and rule of God and his Kingdom.49

Many New England religious groups used covenants as a community building


device to create both a sense of place and identity. Like the written Shaker covenant, the themes of obedience to God’s rules and orders, as well as a personal binding to God were prevalent. Surviving printed covenants from this period demonstrate how these themes were used for more than sixty years throughout New England. For example, the Covenant of the Congregational Church of Hanson involves a binding of one’s self to God and to a community of Christ. As the covenant document states,

You do now make a solemn surrender of yourself to God, and promise and engage in divine assistance, to fear, love, and serve him, whose name is Jehovah, the residue of your days. You bind yourself to him in an everlasting Covenant never to be forgotten, and promise to cleave to him as your chief good. [original emphasis]50

This sentiment was echoed by a religious commentator twenty years later who wrote that covenanting was,

a solemn transaction by which many pious and devoted Christians have dedicated themselves to the service of God. Such bonds or covenants, written and subscribed, have been found among their papers after their death, and it cannot be denied that most of them are exceedingly edifying. . . ."51

Similar to the written Shaker covenant, there is a giving of one’s soul and body to God and while twenty years separate the above two documents, the importance of giving one’s self in both body and soul to God remains the same. Other covenantal agreements

50The Confession of Faith and Covenant, Adopted and Used by the Congregational Church in Hanson. Plymouth: Benjamin Drew, 1832: 10.

from this period built upon the themes of subjugating the self to a greater cause, and provided a means by which to integrate an individual into a Church body. Implicit within these agreements is also a subjugation of the physical body to the requirements and regulations of God’s Kingdom. As one 1820s Massachusetts covenant states,

You do likewise promise, solemnly, before God and his holy angels, and in presence of this assembly, that by the help of the Holy spirit, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, you will endeavor to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, and to be working out your own salvation with fear and trembling: that you will forsake the vanities of this evil world, and approve yourselves the true disciples of Jesus Christ, in all good conduct towards God and man.

You do also subject yourselves to the government of Christ in his Church, -- to the laws of his kingdom and discipline regularly administered in this Church. --And particularly you promise, so long as God shall continue you among us, to walk in communion with the Church of Christ in this place, to attend to all the holy ordinances and institutions of his house, and to conduct here according to the rules of the gospel, and in all things agreeably to what you do or shall know to be your duty.52

These themes of right living and obedience are repeated in later covenanting documents, including the Piscataqua Association of Ministers Covenant in which church members asserted their rejection of lust and expressed their desire to live in harmony with the regulations of the community, and by extension, its leaders.53 This sentiment of obedience and subjugation was also present in antebellum theological books. The works of Philip Doddridge (1702-1751), a Northamptonshire Nonconformist Minister and supporter of religious missions, were widely distributed throughout the antebellum period. His view

of the covenant as a powerful demonstration of an individual’s personal relationship with God, and the importance of the family found ready audiences decades after his death.\textsuperscript{54} His work, \textit{The Rise and Progress of the Religion in the Soul}, served, in essence, as a self-help, how-to-convert manual.\textsuperscript{55} In it, he instructs readers on how to embrace God through the consecration of body, soul, and material possessions to the service of God.\textsuperscript{56} In a later work written by William Holmes and John Barber to elucidate contemporary religious emblems and symbols, this idea of equating walking in the path of God with obedience was again reiterated.\textsuperscript{57}

However, while the written Shaker covenant developed within the same context, these covenants were different in several key ways. While the form of expression in non-Shaker and Shaker covenants was similar, the antebellum Shakers understood the very nature of the spiritual covenant differently from many other Christian Churches. In the majority of Christian churches in the antebellum period, there was a sense that just as there was an Old and New Testament, there was an ‘old’ and ‘new’ covenant with God. The ‘old’ covenant was made with the Israelites, and was superceded by the ‘new’ covenant established by Jesus Christ. Even in works that sought to articulate the differences between Sinaitic and Abrahamic notions of covenant, expressions of the relationship of Jesus Christ within contemporary Christian communities dominated the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54}His works are still available through some Protestant Churches and on-line.

\item \textsuperscript{55}Philip Doddridge. \textit{The Rise and Progress of the Religion in the Soul}. Boston: Timothy Bedlington, 1822.

\item \textsuperscript{56}Ibid, 156-157.

\item \textsuperscript{57}William Holmes and John Barber. \textit{Religious Emblems}. Philadelphia: J. W. Bradley, 1851: 17.
\end{itemize}
discussion. However, for the Shakers, there was a new covenant, one established by Mother Ann when she became one with the Christ spirit in her prison cell in Manchester. While one can argue that writings of many contemporary churches reflect this desire to establish a new covenant with God through a ‘new’ covenant, these covenants offered a redefined relationship with a divine Jesus rather than the establishment of a new and distinct concept. When Mother Ann became the female vessel for the Christ Spirit, she helped to facilitate a new and revitalized covenant between human beings and God.

The Shaker written covenant was also more complex in that it served a community committed to a co-habitational arrangement. The various written versions of the Shaker Covenant served several purposes: to define the temporal and spiritual responsibilities of all Shakers; to protect the community from legal recourse; and to demonstrate some of the historical and theological underpinnings of Shaker beliefs. While an oral covenant was constituted in 1788 by Father Joseph, by 1795, conflicts with apostates led to the development of a written (contractual) covenant designed to be signed by members of the Shaker Church. This document outlined the principle of ‘joint interest,’ and reaffirmed the Shaker principle of equality, particularly in terms of material goods. With the establishment of the written covenant, membership was restricted to adults without debts. The acceptance of the covenant also precluded legal recourse to regain goods consecrated to the Shaker community.

58 See for example Daniel Dow, A Dissertation on the Sinaitic and Abrahamic Covenants. Hartford: Peter B. Gleason and Co., 1811. Sinaitic refers to the covenant made with Moses and the Abrahamic refers to the covenant made with Abraham.
59 Stein, 1992, 45.
The Shaker written covenants must be understood as evolving in reaction to modernity and Shaker interaction with the ‘World’s People.’ As the temporal church was located within various contextualized landscapes, the written covenant was adapted to specific circumstances. The increasing sophistication of the written covenant from version to version reflects evolution within Shakerism. The Shakers were learning from their experiences and interactions with the World’s People and their legal systems and adapting their covenant accordingly. Indeed, the increasing specification of roles and responsibilities reflect the adaption of a religion that had grown from eight members in 1774 to more than four thousand members at its apex. The written covenant, as it evolved, allowed the Shakers to express changing narratives regarding some of their key beliefs. For example, in the 1794 version of the written covenant, the idea of communal property was expressed as ‘joint interest.’ By 1829, ‘joint interest’ was reconceptualized as an undividable consecrated and united interest to be used for the service of God. By this time, the earlier conceptualization of ‘joint interest’ had been challenged in several court cases, and was considered something that could be divided amongst members rather than given solely to God.60 Revisions to the written covenant also reaffirmed female equality in the Society. In the 1814 version of covenant, the importance of Ann Lee as one of the two foundation pillars of the Shaker faith was particularly emphasized.61 A commentary on revising the Shaker Covenant of 1830, stated that revisions should be

61 Stein, 1992, 93.
made to ensure equality of Sisters. The covenant was also revised when the security of the collective identity and property of the Shakers was threatened, in particular by several court cases brought against the society by apostates in Kentucky. After one case (Gass and Banta vs. Wilhite and Als (Trustees of Pleasant Hill Kentucky)), the Shakers argued that improved clarity of the written covenant itself was necessary to strengthen and protect the society:

The Covenant of 1830, Though an immense improvement over the first written Covenant, and the Covenant of 1814, and though it has been sustained in many Courts of law, is very lacking in perspective in several important points so that lawyers and judges frequently fail to understand it alike. In the New Covenant all these points are made plain [and] easily understandable.

The later versions of the covenant strove for definitional clarity of key terms including “One Faith.” This was because Gass and Banta, who had seceded from the society and sued for the partition of communal property, had argued that they retained their faith and continued to be Shakers and therefore had rights as Shakers, including access to communal properties. With the revisions, “One Faith” was redefined to emphasize that a Shaker not only had a relationship with God, but also a specific relation with the Shaker Community and its leadership.

Apostates were often seen as a threat to both physical and spiritual places. Within antebellum Shaker cosmology, those who left the Shaker life were undertaking an act of

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63 Stein, 1992, 92.
spiritual violence against the community and themselves. Expressions of disdain for apostates, when considered in the context of a covenantal violation, can be understood as a reaction to the profaning of God’s Kingdom on earth. The Shaker approach, however, reflects less concern with the corporal body, and more the loss of one of God’s anointed. In contrast to the corresponding acts of violence against covenantal violators found within biblical texts, for the Shakers, the violence of apostatizing was spiritual. It was a cleaving of God’s realm by sinners. One person’s lack of spiritualism was seen as potentially threatening to the whole community. Harsh expressions concerning apostates were less a response to the reduction of the community by one than a reaction to the segmenting of God’s divine realm. The Shaker apostate was particularly abhorred as apostates were considered to fully understand the gravity of their actions; for this reason, the sin of apostasy was unforgivable. This sentiment is especially apparent in the 1837 writings of Isaac N. Youngs, a prominent New Lebanon Shaker, about a particular group of apostates who had settled near New Lebanon. “These contemptible outcasts have principally located themselves in the hollow, near us, which seems very appropriate to perpetuate the old title Hell Hollow! O that God would see fit to shake them as with an earthquake & disperse them abroad, that no place could be found for them.” This idea of no place is important; with the loss of their place in God’s Kingdom, Youngs saw

67However, there are documented cases where apostates who returned to the community were given a second privilege, and allowed to rejoin. For recanted apostasy, the leadership of the community would make a case-by-case judgement.
spiritual and physical exile as fitting punishment.

**God’s Places**

For the antebellum Shakers, place shaped the idea of covenant and Shaker covenants are fundamental to an understanding of Shaker places. In particular, the covenants served to define the relationship between the individual and the Shaker Church and, by extension, with God. It was through the acceptance of the Shaker Covenant and its terms that one consecrated not only material and temporal things, but also that one sanctified one’s body, soul and labour for God’s service. While the written covenants went through many revisions shaped by the places in which the Shakers found themselves, the underlying spiritual covenant remained paramount. In the spirit of the Biblical covenant, Shaker places did not belong to the Shakers, they belonged to God. This gave Shaker places a meaning that was to shape the whole of the Shaker experience. However, Shaker communities also developed within a particular milieu and the articulation of how best to live a life dedicated to God was a point of discussion within New Lebanon; this discussion had impact not only on the spiritual understandings of Shaker Life but also on the physical form that communities took as well as how the Shakers articulated the way to present themselves to the World’s People. The particular expressions of these discussion will now be explored focusing on New Lebanon Shaker Village.
CHAPTER SIX

ENGAGING THE SHAKER META-NARRATIVE:
HOW TO LIVE A SHAKER LIFE

Introduction: Engaging the Shaker Meta-Narrative

The Shaker covenantal meta-narrative reflects the profoundly spatial nature of Shaker life. Shaker life was dynamic and reflective of the spatial context in which it existed. However, the Shaker effort to be in the World, but ‘not be of it’ was the difficult, and often seemingly contradictory, aim of Shakerism.1 This effort has a number of geographical implications, from how Shaker communities were organized, to how the Shakers sought to protect their places, to how the Shakers engaged the World’s People, to the articulation of how Shakerism should be understood.

The Shaker effort to fulfill their covenantal narrative with God in and through place is evident in several different contexts. Some Shaker documents highlight the role of Shaker villages as the visible manifestation of the spiritual realm: the villages were God’s Heavenly Kingdom on Earth or the Earthly Zion. Under Father Joseph, this idea was expressed through spatial models drawn from the geography of Second Jewish Temple. During the period of Mother Ann’s Work, spirit messages drew upon the Shaker covenantal narrative and presented new spatial models based on spirit messages and spirit drawings.2 Ultimately, the Shakers argued that Shakerism was the visual representation of the Heavenly Kingdom. Communalism was another important way in which the

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2 Spirit drawings, like spirit messages, were developed when the instrument was under the influence of a spirit.
Shaker attempted to enact their covenantal relations. While communalism was an integral aspect of the early Shaker settlement in the United States, it was under Father Joseph and Mother Lucy that the Shakers began to enact more formal models of how a Shaker was supposed to act in God’s places. Rituals and routines became increasingly important in Shaker daily life. This is closely linked to the rules and regulations developed to structure and restructure Shaker places. Beginning informally, following the death of Mother Lucy in 1821, the Shakers increasingly turned to more formal methods, including creating the various versions of the *Millennial Laws*, as well as the spiritual laws created during Mother Ann’s Work, to articulate how to fulfill their covenantal obligations. The Shakers recognized that their communities were inseparable from the ‘World.’ How they came to terms with this realization illustrates the complexity of the Shakers’ relationship with the World and its People. Despite official positions on their separation from the World, the Shakers actively engaged with the New York State political process and ultimately undertook a significant public relations campaign including creating a prolific printing program to address detractors and to gain new members. While inevitably there is overlap between these different expressions of the Shakers’ understanding of their Covenant with God, each also represents a specific and often strategic effort by the Shakers to come to terms with their obligations in and through place.

**Expressing Shaker Life through Place: A Dynamic Process**

The development and expression of Shaker identity in and through place was often difficult. There are two main reasons to establish an experimental or utopian community: a belief in the degraded and profaning nature of the World and a sense that
the experimental community may serve as a broader model for beliefs, actions, and community development. Within such communities, these visions are expressed spatially, through written statements, maps, printed publications, and architecture which attempt to illustrate the purpose and motivations of the community, its appropriate design, and its internal and external relationships. The decision to establish such a community is deliberate, drawing on particular visions or theories. However, how a community evolves and continues to develop is often negotiated. ‘Community’ is itself a contested term, referring to both a social group with a common identity, history, and location and to the abstract notion of connectivity with others (i.e., a community of spirit). Communities constructed deliberately were often designed to address contemporary social and cultural issues. As Savulis argues, in times of crisis, the mechanisms of community building and established behaviour codes are contested. Still, it is not only in times of crisis that this occurs; in Shaker villages ongoing debate and the importance of spiritual gifts precluded the establishment of static communal norms. It was important for the Shaker to avoid stifling the creative nature of spiritual gifts by codifying the Shaker act of worship. This was particularly evident in the Millennial Praises:

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7 Savulis, 2003, 161
It is not expected that the people of God will ever be confined, in their mode of worship, to any particular set of hymns, or to any other regular system of words -- for words are but the signs of our ideas, and of course, must vary as the ideas increase with the increasing work of God. . . . As the work of regeneration is an increasing work, and as there can be no end of the increase of Christ’s government and Kingdom. . . .

While this dynamism was reflected in the changing Shaker responses on how to best fulfill their covenantal obligations, the interpretation of what it meant to be a Shaker, existing within Shaker places, varied. The frequent admonishments from Elders to Believers to avoid transgressing ‘accepted’ norms suggests that Believers did not always follow the rules: “[W]e can be fairly certain that believers did indeed lean against bannisters, throw piles of wood about, laugh and talk loudly, and sometimes gossip about the misdeeds of their colleagues.”

The Shakers were profoundly spatial in their theology, their thinking, and their pragmatic efforts to live in the World, but ‘be not of it.’ This effort is also crucial to understanding the competing and particular interpretations concerning the best spatial means to fulfill the Shaker’s covenantal obligations. This discourse occurred at a variety of scales: from broader theological issues to matters of dress or diet.

**The Earthly Zion**

Shakers communities were meant to be examples of the Earthly Zion as articulated in Christian writings. This was one of the most remarkable ways in which the
Shakers expounded their covenantal narrative and is found in both Shaker writings and anti-Shaker writings. The Shaker efforts to manifest the Earthly Zion found a particular expression in the works of Father James, whose organization models were designed to create and sustain the Earthly Zion, and in the spiritual writings created during the period known as Mother Ann’s Work.

Anti-Shaker writings forced the Shakers to clearly state their vision of the Earthly Zion. These works resulted in profound changes to the Shaker sense of place: this included not only how they understood their particular communities, but also how they engaged the broader society and its places. Green and Wells would openly recognize the dominance and importance of apostate perspectives in their history of Shakerism.11 Such works also provide insight into early Shaker community organization and theological understanding. For example, the writings of apostate Benjamin West, writing in 1783, focused on the otherness of the Shakers. He examined not only their specific religious practices, but also questioned their loyalty by drawing attention to the fact the leadership was predominantly English. While primarily a theological attack on the Shakers, his work does touch upon several aspects of Shaker worship, particularly the use of dance to represent life in the Heavenly Zion. “Respecting their dancing, the general representation they give of it, is, that it is the token of great joy and happiness of the new Jerusalem state, and denotes the victory over sin.”12 While West attacks this claim, the identification of the New Jerusalem state as an element of the Shaker spatial thinking and identity is

11Green and Wells, 1823, iii.
12West, 1783, 13.
important. It suggests the Shakers were by this point seeking to symbolize a spiritual place in the temporal realm.

Father James’ writings support this interpretation. In a letter to his family, he clearly links living in Shaker places with the geography of the ancient Israelites, drawing upon Israel and Zion to illustrate the nature of the Shaker community.

I now live with my kind Mother in Israel, Ann Lees, (formally so called) and the rest; and have all things in common with others that have come in to us, [and] live in great love [and] union, blessing [and] praising God, and beautiful Zion, decked with them that believe.13

This use of the language conveyed that the Shakers were God’s Chosen People in his Promised Land. Father James who encouraged Believers to maintain both the temporal and the spiritual places of God:

I charge thee before God to mend thy ways: First, rouse up thy senses; Shake off thy sloth [and] idleness; and as the time of plowing [and] seeding is approaching; get thy farm in readiness . . .Put up thy fences in proper order, [and] sufficient to defend the fruits from devouring beasts. Hawl out your dung, plow your land, when the season comes, [and] as much as you can seed, [and] tend with all your strength. Get up early, [and] in an active manner put things in order, that no obstruction comes to the business of the day. . .14

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14 James Whittaker. Copy of a Letter, written by Father James Whittaker while on a visit to Enfield Ct; and sent to a Brother in Hancock, Mass. (Copied for Daniel Crosman 1850). Manuscript: NOC 10471. February 25, 1782. See also James Whittaker. [Edited by E.D.A.] The Shaker Shaken; Or God’s Warning to Josiah Talcott, as denounced from James Whittaker, one of the United Society Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing. (vulgarily known as Shakers.) New Haven: Bibliographical Press, 1938. In this edited work, some minor wording is different than the 1850 Manuscript. These differences may be result of the later editor identified by the initials EDA, most likely Edward Deming Andrews. Indeed, the title of this later work is adapted from Green and Wells’ History of the Millennial Church (1823) and the images in it are taken from Hanson’s work.
In this profound statement, Father James recognized an important aspect of Shaker life. The Shakers, while of God’s Kingdom, existed on Earth, and while on Earth Believers must set an example of God’s work, both in practice and in physical form. A Shaker village was to be symbolic of all God’s places. To facilitate the creation of such villages, Father James encouraged Believers to purchase properties at New Lebanon for consolidation. Those who were unable to purchase properties were encouraged to make New Lebanon a site of pilgrimage, a model for all communities, and a place of leadership.15

While these works illustrate that the early Shakers were beginning to identify with the spatial narrative of a covenantal relationship with God, it was Father Joseph who built upon the covenantal narrative, focusing particularly on the symbolic and spatial language associated with the Second Jewish Temple. In manifesting his community model, Father Joseph divided Believers into three distinct classes or orders: the inner court (the most spiritually traveled), the second order (those with ties to the World), and the outer court, which was reserved for the elderly who required the most care (figure 6-1).16 Distinctions in Father Joseph’s community were based on age, spiritual accomplishment, and degree of separation from the World.17 These division were also created within the landscape of the Shaker village. The inner court, like the inner court of Jewish Temple, was meant to

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16 Graham, 1996, 75-77
The Shakers differed from most congregations and religious movements of the day as they identified four distinct “dispensations.” According to Meacham, the four dispensations were as follows: The Covenant with Abraham, the laws given to Moses, the Coming of Jesus, and the coming of Mother Anne. Joseph. Meacham (Transcribed: Br A. Hadd). Religious Treatise. Manuscript: OClWh VII B 57. C. 1790: 8-10 [page numbers refer to the page numbers of the transcript]; Michael Taylor. “Shaker Practical Principles And Their Justification.” The Shaker Quarterly. Sabbathday Lake, 1991: 35; Cunicelli, 1993, 199.

Marini, 2001, 129.
communities as possible, while leaders of other communities were to visit the New Lebanon Ministry at least once a year.\textsuperscript{20}

This understanding was refined in the various editions of The Testimony of Christ’s Second Appearing. It was in these texts that a formalized vision of Shaker places emerged, with Shaker villages serving as nexus points between the divine and terrestrial. This was expressed in their writing in which their communities, referred to as “The Church” or the “Church of Christ” were presented as models of the Kingdom Heaven.

The Church of Christ is called the kingdom of heaven, because it is under the government of heaven, and is a state, habitation, or society, necessary to prepare mankind for the happiness of heaven itself; and such is that line of order and disposition of things in the spiritual World, extending to the source of true happiness, to this World, that no soul can enter heaven, but through that kingdom, or Church of Christ.\textsuperscript{21}

Still, by the end of the 1830s, the community at New Lebanon was faced with a spiritual crisis.

The answer to this crisis was found in Mother Ann’s Work.\textsuperscript{22} As discussed in Chapter 4, the era of Mother Ann’s Work saw the rise of spiritualism and spirit messages designed to articulate different ways best to live a Shaker life. Many spirit messages drew heavily upon the covenantal narrative of Chosen People in a Promised Land. Many spoke of God’s coming judgement and how He would protect His people.\textsuperscript{23} This relationship

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid, 132.
\textsuperscript{22}Please see Chapter 4 for a discussion of Mother Ann’s Work.
\textsuperscript{23}Miranda Barber. Beauty of Zion. Words Spoken by an Holy prophecying Angel of God, And written By Mother Ann, in a little book for the Elders, In the Church, New Lebanon. Brought to them by Elder Sister Olive. February 24th 1841. Copied by inspiration April 15th 1841. Typed transcript [no}
was symbolized by a ‘seal’ designed as a visual symbol of the distinctiveness of the Shakers (figure 6-2). The Shakers repeated this symbol in many of their spirit messages, such as the spirit message, *From Holy Mother Wisdom to Eldress Dana or Mother* (figure 6-3). Other spirit messages reinforced the importance of God as an omnipresent being. Many messages exhorted Believers to fear God’s wrath. Emblematic of these works is a spirit message delivered to the Canaan Family through the instruments of the North Family on May 14, 1842. This document, *Words which were Written upon the Doors of the dwelling rooms of the Upper Family, Canaan And Read to the Instruments of the North Family by the Holy and Witnessing Angels*, provides the text to a spirit message that was ‘left’ upon the doors in the dwelling house of the Canaan Upper Family. This spirit message repeatedly noted that each room was protected by the ‘Angels of Heaven’ and that the community should enter each space in fear of God. Represented in these messages is a verbal iteration of the covenantal seal, as stated in the spirit message associated with the Elder Sisters’ room:

> On this door I have placed four crosses on each of these crosses is written the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and to depart from eniquity that is understanding. The crosses are place in the shape of a cross rather in a diamond in the middle of there crosses is written the honest soul shall receive my blessing when they enter this room.25

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24 These document were invisible to everyone except the spiritual instruments in the community. *Words which were Written upon the Doors of the dwelling rooms of the Upper Family, Canaan And Read to the Instruments of the North Family by the Holy and Witnessing Angels*, Manuscript: DCL Shaker Collection Item #47. May 14, 1841.

25 Ibid, [4-5]
**Figure 6-2:** Shaker Seal

**Figure 6-3.** From Holy Mother Wisdom to Eldress Dana or Mother Source: Andrews and Andrews, 1969, 72.
In part of the spirit message created specifically for the dwelling’s meeting room, purity is stated as central to Shaker life, and adherents are informed that all offerings must be pure and clean to be acceptable to God.26

Other spirit messages reaffirmed that the Shakers were the inhabitants of the Promised Land and as the Chosen People had specific obligations to fulfill. As a spirit message written in 1841 to the Second Family indicated, the Shakers were the inhabitants of Zion whose continued presence and grace of God was dependent upon obedience and following God’s prescribed ordinances. As the document states, “None shall inhabit, or dwell in the Zion of my liking on Earth, save those who delight in keeping my word and do my holy will.”27 The document called for cleansing of the community, which had become polluted by pride, envy, and strife.28

While Promey argues that these spiritual manifestations served to restore the ‘visible presence’ of past Shakers leaders, the manifestations went beyond merely facilitating a nostalgic reconnection.29 These messages served to reshape Shakerism and some Shakers used the voices of past leaders to justify changes in the communities. Despite the first manifestations at Watervliet, it was at New Lebanon on April 22, 1838 that Mother Ann’s spiritual presence was acknowledged and recognized.30 While Mother Ann was credited with earlier visions, this manifestation was the first official and public

26Ibid, [9].
27Words of sacred and solemn truth, which were received by your heavenly parents, in deep tribulation; and read to you by the Holy Angels Se ir se ka. To New Lebanon Second Family. Manuscript: DLC Shaker Collection #97. March 18, 1841: [2].
28Ibid: [3-4].
29Promey, 1983, XVIII.
30As Promey notes, there were earlier visions association with Mother Ann. Ibid, 11.
message. This ‘official sanctification’ of the spiritualist movement was significant. It was an effort to return to a more ‘authentic’ version of Shakerism, and reconstituted Shaker places were an integral aspect of this process. These early ministrations included specific instructions for the enhancement and maintenance of the community. The community, being God’s Kingdom on Earth, must not only be spiritually pure, but also in good physical repair:

Mother says she knows how it looks around our premise as well as we do—when she comes to see us and it makes her feel tribulation to see the old rubbish lying about; gates swinging, latches off, fences and walls down, boards off from the fences and so forth—Such things impede the spiritual travel . . . and when she comes to see our meetings, she cannot bless us, neither can she leave her blessing to rest upon us, this is nothing new, we were always taught it.31

This period also saw the introduction of visual representations of models for the Heavenly Kingdom. These spirit drawings were informed by the pre-existing cosmological models of not only the Shakers, but also the World. Works such as James Motts’ This is the boundless Space that surrounds the City of the Saints used geometric shapes to illustrate an understanding of divine perfection.32 Symmetrical structures were also present in spiritualist works such as the fanciful mansion found in Come saith wisdom, for I have formed them a dwelling. These dwellings symbolized the heavenly rewards awaiting the faithful. Among the most notable examples of this form of spirit

31 Gilles Avery. Historical Scetches [sic] or a Record of Remarkable events With Remarks [and] Illustrations Kept By Giles B. Avery, New Lebanon. Manuscript: DCL Shaker Collection Item # 53. [1832]-1855: 111 (April 22, 1838)
drawing was the Holy City Map of the Heavenly Zion (figure 6-4). Created in March 1843, it represents the New Jerusalem, the model to which all Shakers were to aspire. As Promey notes, the ordered composition of the map, the geometric shapes, and the intended correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sphere, implied an important relationship between moral disposition and physical representation.\textsuperscript{33} This thinking echoed contemporary thinking concerning the environment and the individual:

\begin{quote}
The Holy City Map, then, provided a ‘perfect pattern’ of geographical and architectural correspondence, a mediating grid of likenesses which, according to Shaker conceptualizations, spatially and morally aligned the New Jerusalem on Earth with the dwelling place of the Godhead in the highest heavens.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

An emphasis on straightness, symmetry, and order found expression in many aspects of Mother Ann’s Work, including the regulations concerning Shaker buildings and landscapes. It also reflected similar thinking in other spiritualist communities, where the circle and sphere were seen as powerful symbolic representations of the spiritual realm.

Even following the close of the Spiritualist era, the idea of the Shaker village as symbolic of the spiritual realm, as well as the Shaker Church, continued to be important.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{33}Promey, 1993, 67.
\textsuperscript{34}Ibid, 70.
\end{flushright}
Figure 6-4: The Holy City of Zion. Source: Promey, 1993, Plate 1.
The Church of Christ is composed of such as are called and chosen of God out of the spirit and practice of the World. And in obedience to the call, they are separated from all the rest of mankind, and united in one body, constituted a holy and particular people, actuated by one holy Spirit, and are devoted to the cause of truth and virtue.

The Church of Christ is called the kingdom of heaven, because it is under the government of heaven, and is a state, habitation, or society, necessary to prepare mankind for the happiness of heaven itself; and such is that line of order and disposition of things in the spiritual World, extending to the source of true happiness, to this World, that no soul can enter heaven, but through that kingdom, or Church of Christ.35

Again, the theme of Shaker places as the physical manifestation of spiritual models and the Kingdom of God is evident.

Still, perhaps the most articulate statement of Shakerism and its meaning at the end of the antebellum period is in an unpublished autobiography written by Calvin Green in 1859.36 This document outlines Green’s conversion and his understanding of the Shaker faith. Green, who was one of the most articulate speakers and writers on the Shaker faith, was born into Shakerism. At the time he wrote his autobiography, he was seventy-nine years old and had seen most of the profound changes in Shakerism. Within this document, he argued that Shaker communities in the United States were the one true path to God:


The ground of the Eternal Heaven is where there can nothing be shaken, that is, in the holy Mount of the God, where the serpents will not hurt or destroy: no enemy can enter there. ‘No thief can break through and steal, the treasures we have laid up in that Eternal society. But the real kingdom of Heaven we may see is where the heavenly elements are flowing that caused its subsistences to form and grow, and where the principles thereof rule and have the dominion - yet it is a state of trial altho these elementary principles constitute the kingdom of heaven where ever they reign in the World still it only probationary. It is the medium through which all souls must [pass] that ever find real heaven in time or eternity. . . . Therefore no man can ascend to heaven of the Eternal subsistence but thro the tabernacle of God which in this dispensation of the heavenly bridegroom and bride has come down from heaven to open the way for the race of man to ascend into that World whence this glorious tabernacle emanated and open the only way to dwell with God. The new earth is an outbirth of the celestial and elementary principles which are visible built upon earth into a united system of Interest and orders according to the pattern revealed of the heavens in their internal order.  

An important element of this statement is the view of Shakerism and its places as the physical manifestation of the Heavenly Kingdom on Earth, and as the integral nexus for accessing the spiritual world. Such statements illustrate that the Shakers saw themselves as heirs to the Judeo-Christian covenantal relationship to God.

Still, these statements were similar to those in many other communities of the day. Where the Shakers differed was in their conscientious effort to bring their understanding into practice, and this can be seen in the various writings that attempted to express the structure of communal life to best reflect God’s Earthly Kingdom.

**Communal Life**

Shaker communal life was an extension of the expression of Shaker villages as

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37Green, 1859, [46-49].
the visible representative of the Heavenly Zion. While the move to communalism was gradual, it allowed the Shakers to illustrate their understanding of the covenantal narrative. Communalism had it origins with the first Shaker settlement in New York when Mother Ann invited converts to move to Watervliet or to reorganize themselves as local communal cooperatives. In 1784, an anonymous observer noted that:

A gentleman at New-York, excited by curiosity, made a journey lately to Acquakanoch, the residence of people known in this country by the name of Shaker Quakers. This congregations consists at present of about 90 persons under the care of farmer at the place above-mentioned. When it happen that proselyte is made, he is advised to convert his entire property into money and deposit the same with the farmer, who engages to furnish a plentiful supply of provisions and such other accommodation as may be necessary.

By 1784, the Shakers were actively seeking to establish their state of Christian communism under which all Believers would share in spiritual and temporal blessings.

Again, it was Father Joseph who sought to bring order to Shaker life by reorganizing Shaker communities both physically and socially into a hierarchical system modeled of the Second Jewish Temple. This reorganization was based on a developing theology that began to state the importance of order and union as key elements of Shaker

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38 Marini, 2001, 79.

39 “Advices from the American Provinces.” *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, London: December 1784: 950-951. It is also important in that it reveals the possible location of another early Shaker settlement. It is rare, but not unheard of, for a unknown Shaker colony or out family to be discovered. Meader noted in 1964 that a settlement once existed at Weare, New Hampshire in 1784. Robert Meader. “Another Lost Utopia.” *The Shaker Quarterly*, Vol. IV. No. 4. (Winter 1964): 123-124. Proper also identified several villages as well. David Proper. “More notes on ‘Lost Communities.’” *The Shaker Quarterly*, Vol. 6. No. 2 (Summer 1966): 45-47. Acquakanoch was in fact part of New Jersey, and to this point no recorded out family or community was identified as locating there.
Life and necessary to fulfil their covenantal obligations.\textsuperscript{40} His interpretation found expression in the physical and socioeconomic models he created.\textsuperscript{41} His genius was to develop a dynamic system designed to perpetuate Shakerism following the loss of the early leadership. As Green notes in his biography of Father Joseph, it was shortly after his assumption of the position of Lead that he received a revelation to gather the Church into the gospel order.\textsuperscript{42} “All were exhorted to put their hands to work & hearts to God, to serve God with all the faculties of body, soul & spirit, to devote themselves with all their temporal property to God, to ‘build up the kingdom of Christ.’”\textsuperscript{43} This move to the ‘Gospel Order’ involved establishing the importance of union as central to Shaker belief.\textsuperscript{44} This would, in turn, result in respect for one’s Elders as a central precept of Shaker belief. However, for the Shakers no one, including the leadership, was above reproach and that spiritual union required the involvement of not only the individual, but also of the group. This system was rigid enough to provide stability, while allowing progress and change and allowing for the development and integration of alternative perspectives of how to fulfill the covenantal obligations in and through place.\textsuperscript{45} Green noted following the initial establishment of New Lebanon that the majority of authority and decision making rested in the Ministry. However, once the community became

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{40} Proctor-Smith, 1985, 82.
  \item \textsuperscript{42} Green, 1970a, 29.
  \item \textsuperscript{43} Ibid, 30.
  \item \textsuperscript{44} Brewer, 1986, 19.
  \item \textsuperscript{45} Brewer, 1986, 25; Whitson, 1983, 16.
\end{itemize}
formally established, the Ministry separated spiritual duties from temporal duties. This decision resulted in the creation of the Deacon’s position (figure 6-5).

This reorganization of the internal hierarchy of the community served to reinforce the differences between the Shakers and the World’s People. Through the creation of the positions of ‘Trustee’ and ‘Deacon’ and the establishment of the ‘Office’ within Shaker communities, the Shakers were better able to control the influence of the World on the community while providing a single means for egress of Shaker products: “As this lot was established as a bearior or defence between the Church and World, therefore all buying and selling, all trading and dealing with the World of mankind must be done by

Figure 6-5: Shaker Community Organization - 1787-1788. After Proctor-Smith, 1985, 48
and thro - the agency and order of this lot.”46 The Office Shakers, as they were sometimes
known, served an essential role within Shaker Society. These Shakers facilitated the work
of the Ministry, who were unable to hold title, sign legal agreements, or enter into
contracts.47 Deacons served as ‘Zion’s Watchers’ by keeping the Society’s financial
records and property, serving as mediators for different groups inside and outside the
Shaker communities; serving as the official guides, and inspecting all Shaker products to
ensure quality control.48 In short, these members of the Shaker community helped to
protect its places and boundaries. Following the formal establishment of New Lebanon,
the Shakers were soon engaging in business transactions with the ‘World’s People.’

Father Joseph’s model extended into all aspects of Shaker life. It was under
Father Joseph that daily routines began to become fixed; starting in 1790, he established
times for rising, eating, and sleeping.49 He oversaw the establishment of regularized
dancing and marching such as the Square Order Shuffle as early as 1793 (figure 6-6).50
Even surviving accounts of his funeral attest to the increasingly ritualistic nature of
Shaker life. Matthewson, in his letters, described and sketched the funeral procession in

48 Ibid, [1-2].
49 Stein, 1992, 46.
50 Angell Matthewson. Reminiscences in the form of a series of thirty nine letters to his brother Jeffrey . . .
Manuscript: NN Item 9.119. 1776- c.1816: [71]; Robinson, 1893, 51; Cunicelli, 1993, 211;
Karen Guffey. “Shakerism: Its Transformation from Evangelical Sect to Communitarian Society.” D.
Starbuck and M. Smith. (Ed.) Historical Survey of Canterbury Shaker Village. Boston: Boston University,
detail (figure 6-7).\footnote{Matthewson, 1776-c.1816, [126-130].} He also noted the presence of the World’s People who lined the procession path.\footnote{Ibid, [128-129].}

Mother Lucy built upon the family arrangements designed by Father Joseph. She expanded his model to include other Orders, such as the Children’s Order and the Gathering Order.\footnote{Proctor-Smith, 1985, 45.} Each Order, which eventually came to represent a Shaker family, contained its own internal structure. In 1799, the Ministry established a gathering order, known as the North Family, for the acculturation of new converts.\footnote{Records kept by Order of the Church, 1780-1855, 17 (Saturday March 8, 1800).} This reorganization resulted in the development of a new family area in the village, thus changing the landscape of not only New Lebanon, but also of all other Shaker villages. New Lebanon
continued to grow, with the establishment of the Canaan Upper and Lower Families starting in 1813.55 By 1814, the Ministry again changed the relationship between the different families.56

Routines and rituals significantly ordered Shaker life. Rituals helped to construct group identity and maintain cohesion, and were important to the claiming of places and by extension, identity.57 Rituals communicate particular ontological and ideological narratives, along with the pragmatic regulations that govern a group.58 They also reinforce who does, or does not, belong within the group and its places. These rituals heighten religious sensitivity and are gestures of belonging and believing.59 Many rituals of the period revolved around real and symbolic acts of purification. These included the ‘Narrow Path’ ritual created during Mother Ann’s Work, in which Believers paced in straight lines on the meeting room floor, reflecting the Shaker desire to follow the straight and narrow path to God.60 This theme was also the subject of the era’s spirit drawings (figure 6-8).61 The subject of many spiritual gifts was the deliverance of new worship practices. Avery’s diary notes some of highly structured rituals that occurred

56 Rufus Bishop. A Book of Records kept By Order of the Deacons, or Trustees the Church at New Lebanon, in the Town of Canaan, County of Columbia, & State of N York Containing The Most Important transactions of the Church in this place, from time of their first gathering, Together with the Copy of the Covenant, Transfers, and Appointments to the Office, [etc]. Manuscript: OClWhi I B 30. 1802-1824: 73-74.
59 Stein, 1992, 197.
61 Ibid.
Figure 6-8: “The Narrow Path.” Source: Patterson, 1983, 36.
inside the meeting hall of the Great House at this time (Appendix A). However, many of these rituals were short-lived and disappeared within a few years of their introduction. Nevertheless, Shaker life was not structured by ritual alone. Following the death of Mother Lucy, the Shakers turned increasingly to rules and regulations to organize and reorganize their communities.

**Rules and Regulations**

The Shakers, in their efforts to protect and promote a wider understanding of their places used a variety of rules and regulations to structure and restructure their communities. Again, the origins of such efforts can be seen with Father James, who moved toward replacing Mother Ann’s charismatic authority with formal by-laws. He attempted to structure Shaker life through an emphasis on leadership, union, and harmony. His approach was to consolidate the movement through increased discipline including the first specific regulations for Believers (which served to enhance collectivization and the move toward homogenization in worship), greater exclusivity, central organization, and an emphasis on withdrawal from the World.

The efforts of Father James and Joseph were enhanced by Mother Lucy. One of the initiatives she undertook was to standardize Shaker speech and dress. As the Shakers

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62 Avery, [1832]-1855, 147 & 204.
63 Stein, 1992, 197.
Some labors have also been made this season to have the Believers correct their awkward habits, particularly in their manner of speaking— with this view the brethren began to assemble together on the 1st of this month in the evening, and continued the practice once or twice a week for some time. They began by making a collection of all the improper, awkward [and] uncouth words, phrases and modes of expression which had been brought in among us, the obvious impropriety of which when brought to view, seemed a sufficient inducement for all and every one to endeavor to break off from such habits in their conversation.  

Prior to Mother Lucy’s efforts, there were no regulations concerning daily dress, and the Shakers typically attired themselves in “the simple, plain form of dress that prevailed among the common people of the World. . .” Nevertheless, shortly after formal organization, the Shakers moved toward consistency in appearance. “She placed tremendous emphasis on showing a unified and modest face to the outside World.” This effort at consistency resulted in a form of Shaker uniform, that came to represent the ideals of the society. As Koomler notes, as the community moved toward uniformity, regularized dress became more important; while reflecting Worldly influences, Shaker clothing tended to reflect fashions ten to fifteen years old.

With the loss of the last of the Shaker founders, the Shaker leadership increasingly turned to even more stringent methods to ensure that covenantal obligations were met. While the meta-narrative of the covenantal relationship between the Shakers

67 Records kept by Order of the Church, 1780-1855, 29 (Wednesday 30 November, 1800)
68 “History of the Church of Mt. Lebanon, N.Y. No. 12” The Manifesto, Vol XX, No. 6. (June, 1890): 121.
69 Ibid, 122-123
70 Brewer, 1986, 36.
71 Koomler, 2000, 143.
and God remained paramount following the death of the founding leaders, the methods through which the Shaker leadership attempted to ensure fidelity became more dependent upon structured relationships in and through place.\textsuperscript{72} Mother Lucy’s successors formalized regulations for Shaker life, and forwarded these to the other Shaker communities.\textsuperscript{73} Indeed, the death of Mother Lucy saw the first formal codification of written regulations with the Shaker communities. The first by-laws were either oral or articulated as ‘precepts.’ Before Mother Lucy’s death, Brother Freegift Wells presented her with a manuscript document version of the \textit{Millennial Laws}. Mother Lucy refused to adopt the regulations. In part, her rejection was based on a concern that the codification of regulations would stymie spiritual growth.\textsuperscript{74} Nevertheless the \textit{Millennial Laws} appeared shortly after her death and with the full support of the Ministry and New Lebanon Elders.\textsuperscript{75}

The 1821 \textit{Millennial Laws} focused on the importance of union, obedience, and the need to protect the ‘purity of Zion.’\textsuperscript{76} Representing the first systematic codification of the Shakers’ rules and regulations, this document addressed both spiritual and temporal matters.\textsuperscript{77} “Evolving out of the pragmatic needs of the expanding society, they regulated not only behavior and activities but also defined the physical and spiritual boundaries

\textsuperscript{72}Stein, 1992, 123.
\textsuperscript{73}Brewer, 1997, 46; Brewer, 1984, 43.
\textsuperscript{75}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{76}Brewer, 1986, 41.
\textsuperscript{77}[Ministry and Elders - New Lebanon.] Milenial Laws, or Gospel statutes and ordinances adapted to the day of Christ’s Second Appearing, Given [and] established in the Church, for the protection thereof: By the Ministry [and] Elders. New Lebanon, August 7th: 1821. Manuscript: OClWHi I B37 (M1477). August 7, 1821.
between Shakerism and the World.”78 Some regulations were quite profound, relating to
the confession of sins, the orders for worship, and religious duties; other were quite
mundane, reflecting prohibitions concerning gossiping, nicknames, leaning back on
chairs, and bawdy stories.79 The role of the Shaker office as a liminal space between the
World and the Shakers was also stated in this document.80 Further, the regulations
reflected a concern with how the community appeared and was understood by the
World.81 The Millennial Laws ultimately served to define the boundaries between the
Shakers and the World, “establishing clear lines of demarcation between the sect and the
larger American culture, both in a literal and in a symbolic fashion.82” Ultimately, the
creation of the Millennial Laws was an ongoing and dynamic process.83 The Shakers did
not design the Millennial Laws to structure place; one can better understand them as
exercises in restructuring place. The document was a deliberate effort to try to recast the
various places of Shaker life according to changes in theology and modernity.

These regulations were enhanced during the period of Mother Ann’s Work, which
was a period of particularly intense regulation. There were many spiritual messages
concerning how the Shakers could return to the true path of the founders and best fulfill
their covenantal narrative. The period saw the creation of the Holy Laws of Zion (1840),
the Holy Orders of God (1840), the Holy Orders of the Church (1841), and the revised

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78 Judith A. Graham. The New Lebanon Shaker Children’s Order. Iowa State University, Ames,
Iowa 1996 [Ph.D. Thesis]: 11 (footnote 21)
79 [Ministry and Elders - New Lebanon.], August 7, 1821, 5-7 & 13 & 80.
80 Ibid, 27
82 Ibid
Millennial Laws (1845). Like the 1821 Millennial Laws, one can understand these documents as a deliberate effort to reshape the community, and to correct acts perceived to be out of keeping with the Shaker way of life. For example, one spirit message from August 5, 1842 focused on the use of harsh language. Another document, entitled Mother Lucy’s Golden Rule, was quite strict and regulatory in its approach. The message even stated that “[t]here are many more little things that might be mentioned, that are really annoyances in society, and mar our social happenings and comfort very much.” It provided clear instruction concerning the separation between the World and the Shakers: “We hire Men to work for us that are of the World, and our counsel is to keep a separation. Does not this imply that they are beneath our society?” Also outlined were specific activities for those who go out into the World:

6. Ye shall not stand loitering and talking in public places.— Ye shall not go to see musicians, shows, jails, prisons, poor houses, asylums, factories, glass works, Navy-yards, nor anything of the kind to gratify your curiosity.

There were stricter regulations concerning printed material including books, newspapers, reading, and writing. This document included an approbation certificate from the New Lebanon Leadership, giving it an authority not seen in any previous Shaker regulations.

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85Mother Lucy’s Golden Rule Manuscript: NOC 3331 Folder 50-1. No date, No Pagination. The whole of the document has been appended as Appendix B.
86Mother Lucy’s Golden Rule, No date, No Pagination.
87Ibid.
89Ibid, 61-63.
Interestingly, though, the manuscript record also included specific instructions
concerning political activity under the title of A communication to the Ministry and
Elders of the Church; from Father James and Father Joseph, respecting the necessity of

News prints among the people of God.

10. And at such times, as when the Legislature is in session, it is the duty
of the Trustees to see [and] know, whether there are any Laws enacting, or
questions in agitation respecting Believers. And in such cases, if it be
necessary, they may take an additional paper.\textsuperscript{90}

The Shakers at this time increasingly rejected superfluousness within the Society
and were concerned that the increased fortunes of the Shaker Society had led to
complacency in acts and matters of faith. This was reflected in many spirit messages
received by the Shakers.\textsuperscript{91} The Holy Orders of the Church reinforced a social hierarchy
by restricting the age at which one could become an Elder.\textsuperscript{92} It included greater
restrictions on the importation of items such as inkstands, combs, and suspenders.\textsuperscript{93} More
directly, spirit messages such as Mother Lucy’s Advices to the Sisters focused
exclusively on the colour and style of gowns, aprons and handkerchiefs.\textsuperscript{94} These
exhortations against superfluities also found expression in specific actions to simplify

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\textsuperscript{90}Ibid, 77-78.
\textsuperscript{91}See for example Mother Ann’s own Word to Eldress Ruth. January 15\textsuperscript{th} Copied by mortal hand
at New Lebanon February 17\textsuperscript{th} 1841. Manuscript: MeS Box 48. February 17, 1841: 2
\textsuperscript{92}The Holy Orders of the Church, Written by Father Joseph. To the Elders of the Church at New
Lebanon: And copied agreeable to Father Joseph’s word. February 18\textsuperscript{th} 1841. Re-copied at Union Village,
September 1842. Manuscript: DCL Shaker Collection Item #67. 1841-1842: 2
\textsuperscript{93}Ibid, 3-4.
\textsuperscript{94}Received from the Ministry New Lebanon. Mother Lucy’s Advices to the Sisters.[Spirit
Shaker places, including the removal of stoves in the Meeting House.95

The Millennial Laws of 1845 and the other Spiritual Laws were a product of the era in which they were created. The 1845 Millennial Laws were more spiritualist compared with the 1821 Millennial Laws and strongly articulated New Lebanon’s role as the spiritual core for Shakerism.96 However, the 1845 Millennial Laws reflect some very temporal concerns and these Laws can be understood as an expression of contemporary communal issues.97 The Shakers created regulations concerning the use of nicknames, cursing, vulgar expressions, nonsensical and filthy stories, or the discussion of “politics, jesting, joking or talking upon any thing that will serve to draw the sense from the pure way of God.”98 There were also statements about the slamming of doors or gates; loud noises in the dwelling houses; and not commencing large tasks on Friday or the latter part of the week.99 The Shakers designed the 1845 Laws, more than the 1821 edition, to strengthen the distinction between the World’s People and the Shakers. The document’s orders concerning worship made it a highly scripted act of performance.100 However, the 1845 Laws in particular were openly challenged. As Graham notes, some Shakers felt that the regulations were problematic:

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95Isaac N Youngs. A domestic journey of daily occurrences kept by Issac N. Youngs, January 1, 1834-December 31, 1846. Contains a detailed record of events at Mount Lebanon, such as worship services and other religious activities, commercial, and industrial activities. Also includes vital information on members. Manuscript: N Box 19 (Vault). 1834-1846: July 1, 1840.
96[Ministry and Elders - New Lebanon], 1845, 1-3.
97Stein, 1992, 198.
98[Ministry and Elders - New Lebanon], 1845, 31-32.
99Ibid, 63-67
100Ibid, 23.
Some members regarded these additional restrictions and regulations [in the 1845 Millennial Laws] as trivial and ridiculous. Elder Freegift Wells disagreed with the Ministry’s attempt to enforce gospel order with meticulous restrictions. He believed it was “impossible to drive souls to Heaven . . . whatever attempts are made in this line will cause more to jump into hell than it will help along the road to Heaven.” Negativism and internal dissention, especially among the youth of the Society, escalated sharply. An atmosphere of rebellion, unbelief, and “loss of confidence in the Lead” seemed to prevail. By 1848, even the very faithful and devoted Isaac Youngs was writing that “considerable voluntary effort has been necessary to keep up a life of devotion.”

As Johnson writes, the 1845 version of the Laws were ultimately rejected. Nevertheless, following the Spiritualist period, the Shakers continued to try to reshape their community and places through regulation, but the marked difference in this period was in the authorship. Instructions did not come from angels and past leaders, but from the contemporary leadership. An early example can be found in Mother’s Pure Teaching: An Introduction to Good Rules. Similar to earlier documents, it instructs adherents on what actions are most appropriate within the Shaker community, how the community should appear to the ‘World,’ and laments the lost of the early Shaker generations. Like many of the spiritual rules, it provides instruction on the preparation of food, how Brothers and Sisters should interact, and how Believers should undertake their laundry. However, it does not rely on direct divine authority. Another example of this is Eldress Eliza Abb Taylor’s Particular Counsel to the Sisters for their Safe Going.

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101 Graham, 1996, 212-213
102 Johnson, 1971, 139-143.
103 Mother’s Pure Teaching: An Introduction to Good Rules. Manuscript: DCL Item # 134. Shaker Collection. 1848
104 Ibid, [1-2.]
and Protection (Appendix C). This document in particular provides a good contrast to the wording in Mother Lucy’s Golden Rule, as both use Mother Lucy as the catalyst for change. The instructions seem quite mundane, instructing sisters to maintain the Sabbath, to listen and respect their elders, not to gossip, or ask their fellow Believers to will them items should they die. However, while this document still draws upon the instructions of Mother Lucy, it does so by referring to Mother Lucy in the past tense. This is in contrast to Mother Lucy’s Golden Rule in which she is presented as the author. Nevertheless, the purpose is the same; to restructure the community to ensure that Believers maintain their faith.

The 1860 Millennial Laws embodied a new flexibility, stripped of the ascetic spirit of the 1845 Laws. On May 1, 1860, the New Lebanon Ministry issued the Rules and Orders for the Church of Christ’s Second Appearing, which they designed as both a revision and reestablishment of the old communal laws and regulations. This document included three categories rather than the previous two, including Orders, Conditional Orders, and Supplementary Orders. While reiterating the importance of unity, the document embodied a dynamism not found in the 1845 version. Still, there remained a
concern about the inappropriate mixing of the sexes and the appearance of
superfluousness within the community. Further, officially, there remained a concern
about the profaning influence of the World at large. This concern about the impact of
the World’s People, and the importance of protecting God’s places found particular
expression in Shaker writings that illustrate the complex nature of the Shaker relationship
with the World’s People.

The Shaker relationship with the World and its People

The Shakers’ relationships with the World and its People were often complex and
multifaceted. While recognizing that they were inseparable from the World, and in many
ways were reliant upon it, the Shakers argued that they were a separate and distinct
people. As God’s Chosen People living in his Promised Land, the Shakers saw that they
had a duty to ensure the protection of their places. However, the pragmatic realities of
protecting God’s places resulted in a seemingly contradictory effort to engage the
World’s People through their political system. The Shakers also sought to engage the
World’s People through various educational efforts to describe themselves and their
places.

The official Shaker position was clear when they stated that separation from the
World “is an important principle in the new creation, without which the children of God

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110 Rules and Orders for the Church of Christ’s Second Appearing established by the Ministry and Elders of the Church, Revised and Reestablished, By the Same, New Lebanon N.Y. May 1860. Manuscript: DLC Shaker Collection #105. May 1860: 20-21; 29; 54; 55, & 56-57.
111 Ibid, 56-57.
would soon be blended with the children of this World, and lose their relation to the Kingdom of Christ.”

Within the Particulars to be observed in reading the Holy Laws of Zion, designed to accompany the Holy Laws of Zion, there was a clear position on the relationship. It critiqued the continued use of the World’s People as hired help in the village. The Shaker position on politics was also unambiguous:

Hence every faithful member of Christ’s Kingdom feels the absolute necessity of abstaining from all those things which are connected with the honor and glory of this fallen World; from civil and political offices and emoluments; from party contentions and political strifes; from the vain pursuits of ambition and popular applause; and from all those transitory enjoyments which feed the pride and vanity, and constitute the very life of natural man.

In 1816, the Shakers wrote that as God’s People living in his Promised Land, they must “abstain from all the politics of the World, and from all posts of honor, trust and profit; and also from all commercial and other speculations, from which wars generally originate.”

Nevertheless, by Mother Lucy’s time, the Shakers were regularly using the political processes of the World to protect their community. The Shaker response to Eunice Chapman was particularly telling:

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111 Green and Wells, 1823, 260.
113 Green and Wells, 1823, 260-261.
In consequence of the excitement raised by Eunice Chapman in the Legislature, we found it necessary to do something to counteract the prejudice which she had infused into the minds of many of the citizens of Albany [and] of the members of the Legislature by her false accusations [and] scandalous publications against the Society. We therefore, in answer to her false charges, published a Memorial containing a correct statement of such facts as she had falsified [and] misrepresented to the public. This Memorial was dated March 20th 1817. James Chapman, her husband also published a Memorial, stating the circumstances of the difficulties between himself [and] Eunice, [and] of her subsequent conduct; this was dated March 24th 1817, and both were laid before the Legislature, and gave a temporary check to her proceedings.115

The use of Memorials – or public declarations - was first undertaken by the Shakers in 1815 in response to their continuing difficulties with Militia service requirements.116 On January 21, 1815, the Shakers at New Lebanon received a summons for several brethren to appear at a court martial at Hudson, New York. In response, the Ministry and the New Lebanon Elders determined that a published response was necessary.117 The Shakers printed and sent this document to both civil and military officials on February 11, 1815:

“Our Declaration having been printed in Albany this week, the Ministry on their return from Watervliet this day, brought home 200 copies – it occupies 20 pages.”118

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115 Records kept by Order of the Church, 1780-1855, 50 (March, 1817). Among the most ardent of the apostates of the period was Eunice Chapman, who sought to reclaim her children. Chapman’s husband abandoned his family in 1812, and joined the Shakers at Watervliet; he later took their children and placed them with the Shakers. (Richmond, 1977, 72 [Entry 448]) Chapman attacked the Shakers in order to regain custody of her three children and to gain a divorce from her husband. In her attack, she drew on Thomas Brown’s account along with the Society’s Testimony to discredit the Society. (Stein, 1992, 85). On February 7, 1815, she petitioned the New York State Assembly for divorce, and was granted one. (Richmond, 1977, 72 [Entry 448]).

116 “History of the Church of Mt. Lebanon, N.Y. No. 17” The Manifesto. Vol. XX, No. 11 (November, 1890): 241; Records kept by Order of the Church, 1780-1855, 42-43 (1815). A Memorial in this context is defined as a public statement of fact. (Pearsall, 2001, 889.)

117 Records kept by Order of the Church, 1780-1855, 42-43 (1815).

118 Ibid.
Shakers saw this as both a political and religious act.\textsuperscript{119} Within this declaration, the Shakers articulated their pacifism through the language of the American Revolutionaries, stating that their rights as Americans granted them freedom of religion and the right to conscientious objection:

God, in his all-wise providence, has put it into the hearts of the patriotic framers of our state and national constitutions to secure to the people of America those civil and religious rights of man which are fundamental principles of the American government. The Declaration of Independence has asserted these truths to be self-evident: That liberty and the pursuit of happiness are unalienable rights; and that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. The constitution of the United States declares, that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” The constitution of this state declares, “That the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall for ever hereafter be allowed within this state to all mankind.”

Is it possible to find words more expressive of free and perfect liberty of conscience? Liberty and the pursuit of happiness are unalienable rights; any thing, then, of a coercive nature, under whatever name, practiced against conscience, must be a pointed violation of these rights. Fines, taxes, or imprisonments, imposed upon conscience, can be nothing less than an abridgement of these rights; then where is liberty and the pursuit of happiness? can they be any thing more than an empty name?\textsuperscript{120}

It is also noteworthy that this document was presented to the New York Legislature by none other than Martin van Buren, the first of many connections the Shakers would have with an individual who would become, or who was serving as, President of the United States.\textsuperscript{121} The Shakers also drew upon the support of their Worldly neighbours at New

\textsuperscript{119}Bishop, 1802-1824, 87.
\textsuperscript{120}Spier \textit{et al}, 1816, 7-8.
\textsuperscript{121}Records kept by Order of the Church, 1780-1855: 46 (February 1816). Others included Taylor and Lincoln.
Lebanon, Watervliet, and Albany, who provided supporting petitions. These actions suggest that as the antebellum period progressed, the Shakers were becoming more comfortable in the places of the World.

The Shakers also used worldly rhetorical and political techniques to make their case to the World’s People. As one document from Calvin Green reveals, the Shakers would place ‘supporting’ letters in newspapers:

After having written the above [letter] I showed it to Mother and the Elders and it obtained their full approbation, they felt willing as long a piece should go in to the paper as the printer would print: The object is to have it go in perfect disguise if possible, many will doubtless read it that would not if it was seen to be from the Shakers– I felt full of matter, but was afraid if it was very lengthy you could not get it printed in disguise . . . If you feel any thing to add, there is full union to add as much as you think you can get printed; we wish the substance of this to be preserved and printed at any rate. Mother says you need not let any one, but Joseph neither Elders nor Deacons knew any thing about it, Nathan knows nothing of it. Please to accept my love. Calvin

The Shakers were also regularly involved with political matters affecting their interest in the State Legislature. As noted on February 1849:

Sat 10 Austin Buckingham arrived here towards night. His business was to inform us, both verbally [and] by letter, that our friend Taylor, of the Legislature, wished for an interview with a member of our society [and] it is thought best for some to go from here.

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122 Ibid.
The amount of time some members spent within the Legislature demonstrates the level of engagement with the Legislative process.\textsuperscript{125} 

Mother Lucy ultimately realized that to survive as a viable community Shakerism had to engage the World’s People and their places.\textsuperscript{126} They actively engaged the World through commercial activity. It was under Mother Lucy that the Shakers turned the previous craft industries of chair making, small scale manufacturing, and seed production, into major industries.\textsuperscript{127} The growth of the Shaker seed business resulted in continental travel by the Shakers. This too brought them into contact with a variety of places, ideas, and people, including other communal societies, such as the Society of True Inspiration.\textsuperscript{128} In this way, Shaker communities also became profitable, giving the Shakers a very comfortable standard and quality of life.\textsuperscript{129} Seth Y. Wells’s manuscript on Bookkeeping is enlightening in this regard:

\textsuperscript{125} “John Dean returned from Albany, having since the commencement of the late session of the Legislature, spent 84 days in application to the Legislature for the purpose of obtaining an act confirming the right of trusteeship in the United Society of which the Societies in this state had been deprived as was supposed by the Revised Statutes. The Bill or an act in our favor as we understand, passed the house by a majority of 15, and has now become a law. But great has been the labor and expense to gain it– Daniel J. Hawkins spent about as much time as John D. and Frederick Wicker, as much more– so that what is gained has been gained by a great sacrifice of time as well as money.” Records kept by Order of the Church, 1780-1855, 151 (Tuesday April 16, 1839).

\textsuperscript{126} Graham, 1996, 165-166

\textsuperscript{127} Brewer, 1984, 42; “History of the Church of Mt. Lebanon, N.Y. No. 9.” The Manifesto. Vol. XX, No. 3. (March, 1890): 50.

\textsuperscript{128} “Peter Long and Elisha Blakeman returned from their western seed route. – They saw a peculiar sect of people of whom we have lately been hearing singular reports called “The Society of true Inspiration [no end quote in original text]. They appear to be an orderly, meek [and] self denying people. They hold some quite rigid cross-bearing tenets of religion, of abstinence [and] prayer– are governed by spiritual Elders and they by Inspiration thro a special Instrument who writes much, which they keep recorded. They keep very much secluded from the World, much more than we Shakers do; but perhaps not much more so than is for their good. One essential cause of their seclusion is, their being Germans [and] but few of them can talk English.” Records kept by Order of the Church, 1780-1855, 265 (August 26, 1846).

\textsuperscript{129} Brewer, 1984, 42.
In all transactions of business which require accounts to be kept between man [and] man, it is a matter of importance that such accounts should be regularly committed to writing, with the price of quantity of every article bought or sold, properly specified. This is essentially necessary, not only for the purpose of keeping a correct knowledge of our temporal concerns, our annual incomes and expenditures, the profits of our several branches of business, the losses sustained [etc] but also to prevent disputes, and avoid the trouble and loss which might otherwise ensue. The memory of man is fallacious and uncertain; nor can the honesty and integrity of those with whom we deal, be always depended upon.

In another contemporary manuscript, the Shakers attempted to address how the Society should comply with the Laws of their respective states on schooling as they were still subject to the laws of the state.

As part of the process of engaging the World’s People, the Shakers developed the first major publications concerning Shaker theology and history. It was under Mother Lucy – leader from 1796 to 1821 – that the Shakers wrote the first of several major works on Shaker theology. In particular, The Testimony of Christ’s Second Appearing was written as a salvation history, proceeding through the Shakers’ four dispensations. In

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131 “We find in the Holy Orders an order to this effect, -- “Ye shall not receive a certificate of competency in teaching, nor draw school moneys from the World.” No doubt when this order was given, it was thought to be in our power to absolve ourselves wholly from the World, in regard to the schooling of our children, which thing, could we have done, we would be glad, and thankful; but experience, proves that this is not the case; but under the existing laws, we are obliged to yield to the cognisance of lawful authority among the World, as well in this, as many other duties which come under their jurisdiction, or the jurisdiction of law; and, so long as we exist as a society, or people, it is doubtless the case, that, as wholesome citizens, we must yield allegiance to the wholesome laws of our country, which do not counteract our faith [and] principles.” Report on the property of Believers yielding compliance with laws of their respective states re: Common Schools …. Mount Lebanon, N.Y., September 1844. Manuscript: N SC20330, Box 16, Folder 7. 8184d. September 1844: 5-6.
particular, the 1810 edition accorded greater prominence to Mother Ann’s teachings.¹³³

This work served as an important recruitment tool, bringing the Shakers widespread public attention.¹³⁴ As the Shakers wrote,

> [m]any have undertaken to write and publish concerning the principles of practice of a people, who, in derision, are called Shakers, and either ignorance or prejudice have misrepresented both: so that no true information, from this quarter, could be obtained by those who desired it: hence many have become solicitous of having, from the people themselves, so correct a statement of their faith. It is, therefore in answer to the long-repeated requests of the unprejudiced and candid part of mankind, that the following sheets have been prepared for the press.¹³⁵

A letter from Calvin Green to David Benedict reveals the Shakers were also carefully crafting their public image. Contributing anonymously to Benedict’s book A History of all Religions, Green wrote while the Shakers wished Benedict to not identify them as the authors, that “what we communicate to you, whether for publication or not, is done in behalf of the Society, and in union with the leading characters.”¹³⁶

The release of the Compendium in 1859 was another example of a direct effort to educate the World’s People about the Shakers. “In respectful response to the often-expressed desire of the public, to have the information respecting Shakers and Shakerism, that is now spread through some five or six volumes, concentrated in a Compendium, this work has been prepared by the author and compiler, in union with, and aided by, his

¹³⁶ The entry shares a marked similarity to Green and Wells’ A History of the Millennial Church, suggesting that Green may have been the author of the entry. Bloomsburg Auctions. Americana: Wednesday 31st October 2007 [Catalogue]. New York: Bloomsburg Auctions, 2007: 165.
Gospel friends.” However, the Shakers themselves acknowledged that the World’s perception of them had changed.

An edited work on Mother Ann issued by the Shakers in 1858 shows the shift in Shakerism by the end of the antebellum period, recognizing that the relationship between the Shakers and the World’s People had substantially changed:

Many of the most obnoxious features of the Society – such as drew upon it the opposition and secret or open persecution, particularly of religious professors – are now becoming the popular views of the times, at least of all of the progressive minds of the ages.

The Shakers were quick to note that there were still misconceptions concerning the Society, its places, and its practices. Nevertheless, the language of the work reflects a sense of Worldliness; references are made to the telegraph cable linking Europe and North America and to the rise of spiritualism and abolitionist movement within broader American society. Also of note was the fact that the ‘model republic,’ the United States, with its emphasis on individual rights, freedom of speech, and the separation of church and state supported the existence of Shakerism. Ultimately, by this time, the Shakers argued that the American Republic was the foundation on which Shakerism flourished, a

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140 Ibid, vi & 55.
141 Evans et al, 1858, 35; Evans et al, 1859: 34-35
dramatically different understanding of the World and its People from the time of Mother
Ann.

In response to the challenges of declining membership, this end of the antebellum
period saw a concerted effort to engage the World. The Shakers returned to open
preaching, exemplified by several trips to northern Massachusetts in 1854. In 1856, Br.
Frederick Evans spoke to a rally in New York. Approximately two thousand people
attended, including nine reporters. There was an immediate benefit from this effort as
five adults and twelve children joined the community following the rally, but the Shakers
were concerned about the cost of becoming a regional almshouse.

There are, at present about 160 children in this society, the cost of these
childrens board [and] tuition per week cannot be less than $2.00 – making
an aggregate sum of $16, 640 dollars – per year. supposing every two of
them to have 3 relations who should come to visit them and stay one
week, once a year, their board would be at least $5 per week each, the way
we board [and] attend to them, this would make the round sum of twelve
hundred dollars pr year, for the visits of relatives to children in our society
making a total expense to the society of Shakers in New Lebanon for
children [and] their relatives of seventeen thousand eight hundred [and]
fifty dollars pr year. This is a sum, we are not well able to meet. And we
do think it abusive to us for citizen relatives of children among us to come
and stay from 6 to 10 or 12 days on our expense, – [and] to make their
summer tour into the country for pleasure, [and] recruit, to our society and
at our expense is a downright imposition upon us.

By the late nineteenth century, the Shakers were divided amongst themselves.

142 Records kept by Order of the Church, 1780-1855, 557 (July 1, 1854).
144 Ibid, 3.
145 Giles B. Avery. “Copy of a Letter to dated’[March] 3rd 1856”. Letters - New Lebanon (1854-
Conservatives such as Elder Harvey Eads (Kentucky) and Elder Henry Blinn (New Hampshire) argued for a greater retraction from the World, while liberals such Elder Frederick Evans argued for greater engagement. New Lebanon, as well as most of Upper New York State, with its reliance on the agricultural economy, suffered following the Civil War:

The time for rural, communal, celibate life had largely passed in a nation that was rapidly industrializing and increasingly urban. The image the Shakers had long enjoyed as a progressive industrial, and sober sect was changing. They were regarded more as a peculiar, if interesting, remnant of a previous era.

Nevertheless, by the 1860s, the Shakers had become part of the American market system as a result of their prosperity and interaction with the World’s People.

**Conclusion**

The Shakers were not unique in their conception of their communities as places for divine connection. The idea has an history in early Christian thought, exemplified by the Byzantine stylites who served as a human-divine mediums. A unique aspect of Shaker communities was that the social organization was a mix of authoritative and democratic techniques for government; ultimately this theoretical model of organization was both flexible and durable, contributing to the longevity of the Shaker faith. It also

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146 Lassiter, 1966, 18.
150 Guimond, 1971, 98 & 112.
differed in that the manifestation of belief was not limited to theological and theoretical discussion. The Shakers did make a concerted effort to express these understandings of their covenantal obligations in and through the physical places of the Shaker communities. Throughout the antebellum period, the Shakers experienced several major shifts in their community from the earlier years of Father James and Joseph, to the leadership of Mother Lucy, to the codification of Shaker life following her death, Mother Ann’s Work, and its subsequent rejection. Such changes were not just found in the written works and rituals of Shakers. They were also in the community’s built form, and this will be the focus of the next chapter.
CHAPTER SEVEN
BUILDING ZION

[A]rchitecture is not invented, but develops, is the creation of a people, a life, a civilization.¹

Introduction:

Previous chapters have examined the idea of the Shaker covenant, and how this meta-narrative of place found particular dynamic expressions in various Shaker texts. One of the most visible expressions these various understandings of the Shaker covenant is to be found in changes to the physical environment, including buildings and landscape design. Like Shaker theology, the antebellum Shaker physical environment reflected a syncretic relationship with the World’s People. Thus, the physical environment of New Lebanon reflect at once a preoccupation with the most appropriate means to represent a Shaker village as God’s Kingdom and a pragmatic approach to adapting useful worldly designs and ideas. While Shaker architecture and landscape design has become one of the most visible expressions of the Shaker spiritual covenant, writers focusing on the Shakers have often neglected the inter-connectivity between the physical environment of the Shaker Zion and the ‘World’. The Shaker physical environment owed much to the ideas – both spiritual and secular – of the World’s People. Moreover, the adaptation and evolution of the Shaker physical environment further illustrates the struggle of the Shakers to exist in the World, and yet not to be of it.

The Shaker Village and Place

Landscapes and architectural design are critical elements for expressing narratives of place. There has already been a significant amount of work on this topic. Duncan and Duncan’s central thesis was that place and material culture are tangible representations of ideological belief. Walker and Ryan state that at a social or cultural level, the relationship between people and the landscape is a function of social interaction and an expression of the physical landscape as a cultural artifact. “Sense of community, or the expression of cultural beliefs and values that link people to place, involves both an emotional reaction to and an interpretation (perspective) of the landscape.” Minca’s work, while focused on tourism, reveals landscape as both an object and a description, bringing together narrative and the material expression of that narrative. Hagen and Ostergren have argued that landscapes, including any building or architectural constructions therein, are both texts and a ‘stage’ for human action; they see a dynamic relationship between people and place that is often not recognized. The relationship between architecture and place has also been explored by scholars. Markus has demonstrated that while buildings are experienced as a ‘concrete reality,’ they are in fact embodied narratives that continue to develop and change over time. This is supported by

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King who says there is a clear relationship between geography, architecture and urban design. “Architecture, the built world and the constructions each of us would place upon it, equally clearly would seem to be medium in which we represent experience of space [and place], and hopes of a better space [and place] in which our lives might soar and, in time, erode.”

Religious communities have used landscapes and architecture to express their beliefs in physical forms. Rankin’s examination of Mississippi Delta Churches found that a community’s narratives, expressed as its values, aspirations, and understanding of its social circumstances, all contribute to the spatial expression of the built environment. Sprunger’s work on how Puritan architecture revealed the interplay between the theological and the practical and Bennett demonstrated that nineteenth century ecclesiastical architecture represented spiritual beliefs.

Scholars studying utopian communities have often neglected the importance of communitarian landscapes. The study of landscape as a physical manifestation of a community’s beliefs raises questions about the balance between authority and democracy, public and private, and uniqueness and replicability. In communal societies, the process of creating a landscape is necessarily a public process.

Ultimately, the logic of building and design is culturally bound which makes the

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built environment at New Lebanon a powerful conduit to Shaker culture.\textsuperscript{11} This cultural logic extends beyond individual buildings to the entire landscape constructed in part from the world around them.\textsuperscript{12} As indicated previously, Shaker life was organized around the central narrative of the Shaker covenant. The Shakers sought to fulfill their covenantal obligations through efforts to express how the Earthly Zion should appear, how to live a communal life dedicated to God, appropriate and necessary rules and regulations, and the Shaker relationship with the World and its People. They sought to fully live this narrative, but how to do this was a matter of changing debate drawn in part from a complex relationship with the World’s People. Still, it was these relationships and these dynamic interpretations that found expression in the physical environment of a Shaker village. Understanding the built environment is central to understanding Shaker life and theology.

This exploration of the Shaker physical environment differs from other previous efforts because of the distinct nature of Shaker communities. In most antebellum religious communities, the meeting house or church was the locus for spiritual expression; the edifice served as the primary location for expressions of religiosity.\textsuperscript{13} While the term ‘meeting house’ is of New England origin, the role of the ‘meeting house’ was more complex, often serving simultaneously as civic and spiritual core, as both


\textsuperscript{12}Landscape in this instance is understood, drawing on Duncan, as a “polysemic term referring to the appearance of an area, the assemblage of objects used to produce that appearance, and the area itself.” (James Duncan. “Landscape.”R.J. Johnson \textit{et al.}(Eds.) \textit{The Dictionary of Human Geography}. 4\textsuperscript{th} Edition. Malden: Blackwell, 2000: 429.) To this, one can in the role of narrative as an important element used to inform its construction, appearance, experience, and understanding. Meader, 1966, 36.

church and market hall.\textsuperscript{14} As we have seen, the evolution of Shaker theology over the antebellum period saw the development and establishment of particular and often differing social models which found material expression in the built environment of the Shaker villages. Communalization required the creation of a group identity expressed and reinforced through all elements of the physical environment.\textsuperscript{15}

Shaker villages are distinctive in both scale and organization. The Shakers arranged their structures to accommodate the “spiritual, domestic, agricultural, and industrial functions of the community while providing an orderly appearance to the travellers who passed through the villages.”\textsuperscript{16} With several hundred members, Shaker villages were often the size of small towns. To facilitate the organization and management of their communities, the Shakers divided them into smaller units called, in Shaker nomenclature, ‘Families.’ Each ‘Family’s’ name was derived from its geographical relationship – usually the cardinal direction – to the village’s Center or Church Family.\textsuperscript{17} These ‘Families’ were designed as self-contained units (often competing economic units) with their own workshops, barns, and dwellings, organized by function with like uses grouped together for efficiency.\textsuperscript{18}

The Shaker physical environment serves as one of the lasting and most visible manifestations of their belief system. Beyond their furniture, the Shakers are known for their architecture, and many scholars have noted its role in representing Shaker spiritual

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{15}Hayden, 1976, 42.
\textsuperscript{16}Koomler,2000, 24.
\textsuperscript{17}Anderson, 1969, 29
\textsuperscript{18}Emlen, 1987, 8.
\end{footnotesize}
and organizational beliefs. The complexity of a Shaker community is reflected in its architecture and landscape design.¹⁹ The Shakers understood the whole of their Society and community to demonstrate of the complex interrelationship between the individual, the physical environment, and the community’s beliefs: “Shaker architecture, indeed everything produced by the Shakers, was a material manifestation of the Order’s religious, social, and utilitarian principles.”²⁰ More broadly, the Shakers arranged and understood their villages geospacially, with New Lebanon serving as the spiritual core.²¹ It is important to understand that the Shakers lived in a series of nested places: while trying to live in the world, but not be ‘of it,’ the impossibility of separating themselves from the geographical context in which they were meant that external influences shaped the physical expression of Shaker beliefs.

**Nested Places**

The Shakers, far from being isolated, lived, as we all do, in a series of nested places. Heirs to an increasingly global Christian monastic tradition, they also lived in the new American nation which combined Enlightenment ideas and religious fervour to differing degrees. Further, the Shakers at New Lebanon lived in the landscape of Columbia County with its own unique cultural and architectural traditions. Elements from all these nested scales of existence and meaning were combined in the Shaker landscape of the New Lebanon village.

The Shakers were not unique in creating a community set apart. In many ways,

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²¹Stein, 1992, 90.
the isolationist lifestyle espoused by the Shakers drew on much older traditions of abnegation to achieve salvation. The Mennonites exhibited a similar tendency to separate believers from the world: “[a]ctivities of its members have tended to be restricted to those centred in the church.” This tendency is also exhibited in other branches of Christianity including some branches of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. All these groups drew on a much older tradition. St Antony’s motivation for his monastic lifestyle (3rd and 4th centuries) was emulation of the life of Christ:

St Antony and the monks who followed him into the Egyptian desert were consciously rejecting everything that Alexandria stood for: luxury, indulgence, elegance, sophistication. Instead they cultivated a deliberate simplicity – sometimes even a willful primitiveness – and their way of life is reflected in their art and their architecture.

Traditionally in the Christian faiths, self denial through the rejection of materialism was a path to the divine. Within the antebellum United States, these Christian monastic undertones found powerful resonance when combined with Enlightenment beliefs in the ability of society to reshape the individual through the manipulation of the built environment.

In the antebellum period, it was widely believed that specifically designed built environments might correct the moral inadequacies of the fledgling American nation. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had many reform movements that pressed

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23 Ibid, 21.


for social improvement through the physical transformation of milieu. The Enlightenment’s focus on the improvement of the human condition facilitated the development of new ideas about society and built form: “the right culture leads to the right buildings.”26 The idea that the built form could serve as an impetus for reshaping the individual was not unique to communal societies. For example, Thomas Jefferson recognized and actively promoted symbolic architecture in national identity creation and experimented with architecture as means to impart narratives about political and society life, exemplified by his use of the Palladian style.27 Three of the most notable antebellum institutions influenced by this thinking were the prison, the asylum, and the almshouse.

The prison was an institution designed to isolate and to re-educate. Until the latter 1700s, offenders were held in local jails only until the appropriate fiscal, corporal, capital or geographical punishment could be applied. However, in 1787, Englishman Jeremy Bentham designed a prison with a circular arrangement of cells around a central observation tower, known as the panopticon. (Figure 7-1). This design allowed guards to watch prisoners who could not know whether they were being watched.28 While some scholars have questioned the direct influence of Bentham on antebellum American

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28Hayden, 1976, 34.
thought, variations on this model informed the construction of American prisons for the next two centuries. Both the Virginia Penitentiary (1800) and the Western Penitentiary at Philadelphia (1826) reflected Bentham’s ideas.²⁹ At the same time as the emergence of the panopticon, there was also an undercurrent of belief in American society that crime

²⁹Nicoletta, 2003, 371
and insanity were curable diseases; deviance was the result of corruption in an individual’s environment that family and church could not counter. The penitentiary was thus designed as a solution.30

The panopticon “brought the prison into the realm of utopia,” creating an environment where reason would counter deviance.31 The challenge facing the architects of institutional buildings was to manifest specific social theories in physical form. The design (external and internal) and daily routine of the penitentiary were created to eliminate criminal tendencies. Penitentiary designers were to separate the individual from all forms of corruption inside and outside the prison. Prisons that had once been places of last resort became national monuments designed to both impress and intimidate. Prison architecture and arrangement became central to reformers of the period; it became a moral science. The divisions of time and place, such as the layout of the cells, the methods of labour, and the manners of eating and sleeping became critical issues. This line of thinking extended beyond the prison and found expression in other institutions such as factories, hospitals, schools, almshouses, and asylums.

Like the prison, the antebellum asylum had its origins in Enlightenment thought. Benjamin Rush, who opened an asylum in Philadelphia, argued that there was a clear relationship between mental health and the social/physical environment.32 Like criminals sent to prison, the ‘mentally ill’ were sent to imposing buildings designed to reorder the chaos of the human mind. Also like the prison, the institutionalization of the individual

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31 Robin Evans, as quoted in Nicoletta, 2003, 371.
required segregation and the establishment of a strict routine. Ultimately, as Foucault argues, the asylum was an effort to subjugate insanity to reason, to contain and correct it.33 The institution and its design, as opposed to medicine or surgery, were seen as key to solving insanity. The asylum was constructed to ensure social cohesion through the example of right action.34

Many antebellum almshouses also reflected this preoccupation with built forms and regulated activity. As Bourque notes, almshouses represented a physical attempt to address social issues that allowed a community to claim a compassionate solution to the profound changes resulting from industrialization and urbanization.35 These edifices were also marked by simple design reflecting the commitment to thrift; ornamentation was equated with financial excess.36 Moreover, like the prison and the asylum, the work regime and daily activities of the institution were highly regulated around work, lauded as the key to self-improvement and social advancement. Like the prison and asylum, residents were classified by sex, age, and moral character.37

These three institutions, while not models for the Shakers per se, do illustrate important undercurrents in antebellum American thought. While the Shakers did not design Shaker villages with prisons and asylums in mind, the landscape of the Shaker community had evolved by the 1820s and 1830s as a place designed to restructure the

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34Rothman, 2002.
36Ibid, 62-64
37Ibid, 62 & 68.
individual. Akin to the prisons, almshouses, and asylums of the day, Shaker villages were designed to be nostrums for social ills. Individuals removed from the sinful and fallen world were better able to save themselves by bringing themselves into the useful service of God. Also, as within the various penal institutions, the activities of the individual were often highly structured, segregated, and regulated.

The particular places of Columbia County also influenced the design and construction of New Lebanon Shaker Village. The spiritual ideas of the region influenced the nascent community’s theology, but the vernacular architecture of the region was also important. This was true for the Shakers but also for many other communal groups.38 Many early Shaker buildings were indistinguishable from the other settler structures in the Berkshires and Columbia County due to the presence of English, Dutch, and New England influences.39 Many Dutch traditions in the Hudson River Valley persisted throughout the English colonial era, and rural Dutch architecture was the dominant form of Dutch American architecture in Columbia County.40 The gambrel building style in Columbia County reflects a typical use of a one and a half storey gambrel frame in the English style combining anchor-bent and box-frame techniques that were themselves a hybridization of Dutch American ideas with Georgian building practices (figure 7-2).41 As a result, many older houses and some institutional and agricultural structures in the

38 Hayden, 1976, 35.
41 Zink, 1987, 284 & 291.
county reflect similarities such as the spacious, gambrel roof.\(^{42}\) Gambrel roofed buildings became popular in Columbia County in the 1750s and 1760s and were used by the Yankee, English, and Dutch communities until the 1790s.\(^{43}\) This type of structure was often symmetrical in external appearance with rooms on the second floor.\(^{44}\) Notable examples of era include the Johannes L. Van Alen house (c1760), The Bowery (1762), the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church (1767) and Spencer-Hinds House (figures 7-3, 7-4, and 7-5). The Shakers themselves recognized the influence of this vernacular style:

> Sometimes from lack of experience they increased the expense and amount of labor on a building by making a curb or hip roof instead of a gable roof. This, however, was the custom of this part of the country and on this account generally adopted.\(^{45}\)

\(^{42}\)A gambrel roof is a roof with a shallow slope located above a steeper slope.


\(^{44}\)Zink, 1987, 291.

\(^{45}\)While the Shakers identified the roof style as “curb or hip,” surviving example of the period are more accurately termed gambrel. “History of the Church of Mt. Lebanon, N.Y. No. 11” *The Manifesto*. Vol. XX. No. 5 (May 1890): 99.
Figure 7-3: Johannes L. Van Alen House c. 1760


However, it was not merely local custom that resulted in the adoption of the gambrel roof. Angell Matthewson, a member of the Shaker community at New Lebanon in its early years, observed a particular event in 1789 that exemplified the Shaker leadership’s desire to create a particular sense of place:

About this time a brick building was erected for an office for David Meacham to do some business in as he was first deacon in the church [and] chief overseer to provide stock for the merchances [and] this building is about 20 feet square as I was passing the road yesterday see it with a square roof on it shingled half up the fore sides today I passed again [and] see it with a gambrial roof on it shingled about half way up [and] the joiners to work on it as on the first time I now met a man of my acquaintance asked him how it hapned that the joiners was so unstedt minded as to yesterday a shinglin that building with a square roof on it now it has a gambril roof on it [and] in the same forwardness of yesterday – he sais viz Elder Joseph said when he see it it was not in church order it should be gambril roof.46

What is notable about this passage is the desire to project a particular image via architecture, and that a particular design element (gambrel roof) had come to symbolize ‘church order.’

This office was not the only structure to use the gambrel roof at New Lebanon. The First Meeting House also reflected this local influence and it was this meeting house style, with the distinctive gambrel roof, that was reproduced at most eastern Shaker villages, (figure 7-6, 7-7 and 7-8).47 How the gambrel roof became accepted as illustrative of the gospel order is unclear due to the lack of documentary material from

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46 Angell Matthewson. Reminiscences in the form of a series of thirty nine letters to his brother Jeffrey ... Manuscript: NN Item 9.119. 1778- c.1816: [92-93].
47 Pratt, 2002, 8. Surviving examples include the Shirley Massachusetts meetinghouse (now at Hancock Shaker Village), Canterbury New Hampshire meeting house, and the Sabbathday Lake Maine meetinghouse. Photographs and drawing existing illustrating the appearance of the New Lebanon New York meeting house, the Watervliet New York meetinghouse, the Enfield Connecticut meetinghouse
Figure 7-6: First meeting house at New Lebanon.


Figure 7-8: Canterbury meeting house. Author’s Image. 2003.
this period. Nevertheless, the works of both Gelernter and McAlester and McAlester suggest that the Shakers accepted the roof style as it provided greater space in the attic and increased the roof span. Additionally, at this time the Dutch style was widely associated with thrift.

**New Lebanon as a Dynamic Place**

To consider Shaker villages static would be erroneous as the physical environment of Shaker villages was constantly evolving. The Shakers built, adapted, and demolished structures throughout the history of New Lebanon. The earliest structures built by Believers in the last quarter of the eighteenth century were crude log constructions on preexisting farms. The Shakers would burn, demolish, and adapt these structures throughout the antebellum period (both Shaker built and pre-existing), and by the end of the antebellum period, few remnants of this landscape survived. One that did was a plain house “standing on the premises of John Bishop [one of those who early donated his property to the cause], where is now the (site) . . . of the South Family” (figure 7-9). These early structures served as the basis for the later consolidated

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51 While Lassiter states that the building was originally a gambrel-roofed structure, the surviving post antebellum period photograph of a structure identified as the Bishop house shows a very different appearance. This difference could be attributed to later modifications, but sadly as the building does not currently exist, there is no means to undertake an detailed analysis on the structure of the building. Anderson, 1969, 51.
villages, which the Shakers transformed as they built structures better suited to their needs and beliefs. \(^{52}\) Change seems to characterize the Shaker community at New Lebanon: between 1790 and 1864, the Shakers undertook an energetic building program. \(^{53}\) As Appendix D shows, the Shakers undertook many projects and they were often quickly executed. They argued that “Buildings, which get out of repair, should be repaired [sic] soon, or taken away.” \(^{54}\)

The early 1790s was a particularly active period for community development. Shortly after the establishment of the community at New Lebanon, the existing structures proved inadequate to address the influx in the community’s population. \(^{55}\) These projects were undertaken not only at New Lebanon but at other Shaker villages as the Ministry


\(^{53}\)Lassiter, 1966, 19.


\(^{55}\)“It now became necessary to provide more extended accommodations for the family, and a dwelling was soon in process of construction. The frame-work was raised on the 27th of August 1788. A large number of workmen were employed, who contributed their services gratuitously, and so rapidly was the work pushed forward that the family began to occupy it on the following Christmas.” “History of the Church of Mt. Lebanon, N.Y. No. 2.” The Manifesto. Vol XIX. No. 8. (August, 1889): 170.
brought them into “gospel order.” As the Shakers wrote in 1791,

> [t]his was a season of building among Believers. Besides the two dwelling houses going on here, in the Church, a meeting house was building at Watervliet, one at Harvard, and one at Enfield Conn. also a dwelling house for the Church at Hancock. Brethren went from the Church to assist at Harvard, Enfield, and Watervliet.\(^{56}\)

As Shaker writings suggest, many structures were quickly and frugally built according to the beliefs of the day concerning superfluity.\(^{57}\) After 1805, the Shakers remodeled many to conform with their particular visions of how Shaker villages should appear, influenced by their understandings of the best means to fulfill their covenant obligation, and how God’s Kingdom on Earth should appear. These efforts at remodeling included raising buildings by adding new storeys, replacement of roof styles, use of finer masonry, and remodeling interiors.\(^{58}\) The overriding principle for the new construction and remodeling was order and symmetry. As one can see in examining the North Family brethren’s workshop, the Shakers designed the interiors of their buildings to make the chimneys appear symmetrical on the exterior of the structure (figure 7-10). This trend was not unique to the Shakers: bilateral symmetry was the standard architectural form in late


\(^{57}\) “The halls of these [original] buildings were quite narrow and the stairs very steep, in order to economize the room as much as possible. Very few of these first buildings were ever painted, as that was considered superfluous, and for many years after the custom had been introduced, only the best dwellings were allowed to have a coat of paint. All the buildings made previous to 1805 were very plain. The halls and rooms and all stairways were very contracted, and on the outside no jets to the eaves, nor any trimmings about the doors were permitted.” “History of the Church of Mt. Lebanon, N.Y. No. 11” The Manifesto. Vol. XX. No. 5 (May 1890): 99.

\(^{58}\) Anderson, 1969, 51 & 220-221.
eighteenth century New England.\textsuperscript{59}

A defining character of the Shaker effort to fulfill their covenantal obligation was the organization of communities. The implications for landscape features is reflected in the words of Father Joseph:

The yards and fences connected with the buildings ought to be according to the order of the buildings– their lines parallel with the lines of the buildings that is, if the buildings are placed East, West, North and South, the fences ought to be also, so far as the ground will admit.\textsuperscript{60}

The design of a Shaker village was not meant to be limited to the building. As an all-encompassing vision of the earthly realization of the heavenly kingdom, the Shakers also focused on the use of the village’s landscape to manifest their beliefs.\textsuperscript{61}


The Shaker use of landscapes

The Shakers adeptly used the physical landscapes in which they found themselves, using existing topography and vistas to enhance their communities. New England Shaker villages were built to take advantage of vistas and the striking nature of many Shaker communities was the direct result of the choice of a specific location, often on a hillside with good sunlight and water supply. 62 This was itself a New England convention for community planning.63 The Shakers also constructed their buildings to take advantage of natural elevation changes: at New Lebanon, structures such as the North Family Dwelling House (1818) and the Great Stone Barn (1858) were built into hillsides to facilitate multi-level access from the exterior (figures 7-11). These efforts had practical implications: “[b]y taking advantage of the natural topography, the Shakers could enter the various levels of the [Great Stone] barn easily . . . and without bridges, which were expensive to build as well as to maintain.”64 While the Shakers never had formal community designs, as large landowners they could reshape huge areas for their use: “The Shakers controlled enough land to level hillsides, redirect stream beds and plow the soil into large, contiguous, even fields.”65 Ultimately, the Shaker organization of the landscape of New Lebanon illustrated their vision on a broad scale exemplified by a

63 Sinnott, 1963, 10.
64 Anderson, 1969, 261
well organized and a linear plan (figure 7-12).  

It is important to recognize that community design was still emerging as a professional field within the United States. Antebellum Americans often held professional architects in low esteem. Builders typically drew upon local examples for new technological and design ideas. Nonetheless, by the 1830s, the Shakers recognized the value of architecture as an expression of civilization and social growth, as stated by Calvin Green:

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68 Ibid, 33.
Figure 7-12: Image of New Lebanon’s Church Family. c. 1865. Note the linear nature of the structures and fence lines in relation to the road. Source: Irving, Photographer [attributed]. View of New Lebanon Church Family. Manuscript: NOC 12583. c. 1865.
Architecture, the science of workmanship, that is, all kinds of building [and] mechanical works. This grows more and more important as society improves in civilization.69

Although architecture was generally poorly understood, the combination of ideas about beauty and utility informed antebellum ideas about appropriate building and landscape design.70 The antebellum period saw the rise of the small rural or suburban community as the ultimate expression of American genteel living.71 This was also the era of the village green movement in New England towns with its emphasis on park-like settings.72 The reorganization of cemeteries or removal of gravestones in many New England squares exemplified this trend.73 The Shakers were part of this movement as they restructured their cemeteries in the 1830s and 1840s. In 1835, the Watervliet Shakers community reorganized its cemetery, moving the graves of Mother Ann, Father William, and Mother Lucy between May 9, 1835 and May 12, 1835.74 The graves of the leaders were to “correspond in range from East to West, with those already occupying the yard” and to create a place for continuity with the past.75 At New Lebanon, the Shakers undertook a similar initiative in the 1840s.

The Shakers’ use of their landscapes found notable expression in their use of

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70Maynard, 2002, 37.
72Nicoletta,2003, 356.
73Ibid, 356.
74Concerning the Removal of the remains of Mother Ann, Father Wm, etc at Watervliet, NY. Manuscript: N Box 1 Folder 10. 1835: 4.
75Promey, 1993, 118; Concerning the Removal of the remains of Mother Ann, Father Wm, etc at Watervliet, NY. Manuscript: N Box 1 Folder 10. 1835:1.
preexisting water sources for their industrial and community buildings. In certain cases, such as at New Lebanon and Canterbury villages, the Shakers were not able to rely on natural water sources, so they developed elaborate hydrological systems of reservoirs, mill ponds, dams, and aqueducts. Youngs, in his journal, illustrated this complex and sophisticated system (figure 7-13, figure 7-14, figure 7-15)

Their distinctive architecture and landscape planning was a recruitment tool for the Shakers, designed to gain the World’s respect by demonstrating that Shaker life led to both profit and salvation. These structures also countered anti-Shaker propaganda, especially in the later antebellum period when broader America society saw the environment as evidence of moral character. While typical outbuildings and dwellings marked most agricultural landscapes of the period, the Shaker village had a greater number of buildings, many of which were more industrialized than typical farms. Scale provided another notable distinction:

At first glance, the North Family buildings look like paired-down versions of the region’s Anglo-Dutch, Federal, and Neoclassical architecture. But [a] growth hormone seems to have been injected into every feature, for both practical and aesthetic reasons. . . .Gabled or arched roofs are shallowly pitched to maximize attic spaces; the Shakers softened the awkwardly tall upper stories with decorative flared cornices.

The Shaker organization of their landscape was designed to make the Shaker villages a transition zone between the World’s People and the Shakers. Contemporary observers

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77 Schiffer, 1979, 7; Nicoletta, 2003, 357.
78 De Wolfe, 2002, 156.
79 Kahn, 2003, 12.
80 Promey, 1993, 91.
Figure 7-13: Diagram of the water system at New Lebanon. Part 1. Note the interconnection between buildings and the use of lead and iron pipe. Source: Isaac N. Youngs. A domestic journey of daily occurrences kept by Issac [sic] N. Youngs, January 1, 1834-December 31, 1846. Contains a detailed record of events at Mount Lebanon, such as worship services and other religious activities, commercial, and industrial activities. Also includes vital information on members. Manuscript: N Box 19 (Vault). 1834-1846.
Figure 7-14: Early 20th Century Postcard Image of the Shaker Reservoir. Author’s Collection

Figure 7-15: Remnants of Shaker Dam near the North Family site. Author’s Photograph. 2004.
often remarked on the change experienced upon entering a Shaker village.\footnote{Hayden, 1976, 43.} To illustrate this change, these observers often referred to the architecture and design of the communities and noted the difference between the Shaker villages, and those of the world.\footnote{Stein, 1992, 98-99; Glendyne Wergland (ed). Visiting the Shakers: 1778-1849. Clinton: Richard W. Couper Press, 2007. Wergland’s book provides numerous transcriptions of visitors observations and perceptions of a number of Shaker villages, including New Lebanon.} An example of these observations include Harriet Martineau’s description, which was published in the Penny Magazine in 1837.

The road through the settlement had not a stone bigger than a walnut upon it. Not a weed was seen in any garden; nor a dung-hill in all the place. . . .
The windows were so clear, they seems to have no glass in them. The farm dwellings were painted straw-color, and roofed with deep red shingles were finished with the last degree of nicety [sic] – even to the springs of the windows, and the hinges of the doors. The floors were even, and almost as white as marble. \footnote{As quoted in Wergland, 2007, 253.}

Many visitors, upon examining the community, noted that the successful nature of New Lebanon could been readily observed. As one author wrote in 1839:

The village is neatly built, and laid out in fine orchards and gardens – the buildings are closely arranged along a street of about one mile in length; all of them are comfortable, and a considerable proportion of them are large. The greatest order and neatness are conspicuous in all that pertains to the village.\footnote{Ibid, 271.}

Ultimately, the orderly nature of Shaker villages and impressive edifices located within them, combined with a concerted effort to maintain a distinctive appearance, served as a visual cue that one was in a different place marked by order, stability, and in latter years,
wealth.

Shaker communities were also deliberately located on public transportation routes and it was on these main routes that the most important Shaker structures were located.\textsuperscript{85} New Lebanon, for example, was built along the main stage coach road between Albany and Boston. This too reflected an emerging New England tradition in the early nineteenth century that carefully placed new and prominent architecture along public roads.\textsuperscript{86} Well designed and neat homes and inns, such as those of the Shakers, were often lauded as counterpoints to the disordered nature of most homes, taverns, and inns.\textsuperscript{87}

Shaker villages were also different in that the typical community pattern was a clustering of dwellings and outbuildings that facilitated both privacy and efficiency. As Poppeliers writes,

Shaker buildings were placed in relation to each other with fitness and efficiency in mind, presenting a pleasing and well ordered community plan. The principal structures were usually located around an inner court or yard or along a main access road, the shops behind, and a large barn sprawling off at a distance. . . . The greatest determining factor in the design of the overall community was the “family order.” Each “family” usually maintained its own dwelling and service buildings, such as a laundry, a barn, and various workshops. Some structures, such as the meetinghouse, the school, and usually the trustee’s office, where business was transacted with the outside world, were used by the whole community, and these were ordinarily located in the Church family.\textsuperscript{88}

This stood in contrast to the seventeenth and eighteenth century New England tradition of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{85}Nicoletta, 1996, 33.
\item \textsuperscript{86}Wood, 1986, 58 & 60.
\item \textsuperscript{87}Maynard, 2002, 116.
\end{itemize}
more dispersed communities. As both Wood and Arendt have argued, prior to the 1850s, many New England communities consisted of scattered farmsteads with a ‘centre’ marked by a meeting house, occasionally an inn or tavern, and sometimes several dwellings. The homes of these farmers tended to be modest one storey homes, with few substantial two storey homes. The farmsteads themselves illustrated an ethos of highly individualistic landholding, where there was an expectation of property ownership. This model was similar to the settlement pattern in the Hudson Valley where, in the colonial period, families lived on individual lots in small rural agricultural communities.

While the nucleated centre model of New England villages has become a ‘historical landscape icon’ of American historical development, it was a post-colonial development, a product of the developing American market economy and infrastructure improvements. When these nucleated communities did develop, they were compact in form, occupying only several acres. In the Federal period, as many of these villages began to commercialize, development was focused on these traditional centres, accentuated by improved roads and communications. Nevertheless, with few

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89 However, as Wood notes, by the early nineteenth century New England villages were starting to develop rapidly around meeting house lots and moving towards greater consolidation. (Wood, 1986, 58-58 & 63).


91 Ibid, 86-87.


96 Wood, 1997, 89.
exceptions, they remained smaller in scale, with an average of 29 houses in a community.\textsuperscript{97} In contrast, by the 1850s, the New Lebanon community owned several thousand acres and the central family complexes (South, Centre, Church, and North Families) containing dozens of structures stretched over a mile in length (figure 7-16).

This was comparable in scale to the nearby town of Hudson, which was the capital of Columbia County and which was itself focused on a mile long section of a single street in 1841.\textsuperscript{98}

The Shaker village can be divided into four distinctive, yet interrelated, zones: the meeting house, the dwelling house, the office, and the industrial/agricultural areas. Each served an important role and performed a specific function in Shaker life but these zones did change. There were often controversies around the appearance and design of these structures, especially as they were considered a demonstration of community belief and an expression of the Shaker covenant. This too was mirrored by debates among the World’s People, some of whom argued in the antebellum period that extravagance in

\textsuperscript{97}Ibid, 122.
\textsuperscript{98}John Warner Barber and Henry Howe. \textit{Historical Collections of the State of New York}. New York: Published for the Authors, 1841: 116.
construction design was a threat to the ‘moral fabric’ of the fledgling American nation. As exemplified by the creation of the ‘Feast Ground’ in the 1840s, there were also efforts to create new places within the community. Nevertheless, each of these zones reveals how the Shakers sought to create places representative of their spiritual and community beliefs while demonstrating the interconnections between the Shakers and the World’s People.

The Dwelling House

The dwelling house was a key element in Shaker village landscapes, serving as “the focal point of an individual’s existence, and the primary locus of daily activities.” Like all structures, it was not static in its design and conception. A pre-existing community pre-dated the official gathering of the Shakers at New Lebanon, and the Shakers adapted many of these existing structures for communal use, such as Rufus Bishop’s house. Many of these structures were small and poorly built. The first purpose-built Shaker dwelling house was completed on August 27, 1788, just south of the 1787 meeting house. A second dwelling house was completed on June 2, 1791 for older members. While most of the earliest purpose-built dwelling houses have not survived at New Lebanon, the first South Family dwelling house stands as a notable exception. Built in approximately 1813, it lacks the symmetrical nature of the later dwelling houses, but is strikingly similar to many New England farmhouses of the period.

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100Stein, 1992,151.
103Various. Ministry Journal (Sisters - Mount Lebanon), 16.
Containing a single front entrance and an L-shaped design, it is markedly different from the more dormitory type structures that became dominant in Shaker villages by the 1830s (figures 7-17 and 7-18). Despite heavy alterations by the end of the antebellum period, the original Church Family dwelling (destroyed in 1875) was designed by the Shakers as an enlarged farmhouse. While reflecting the broader architectural patterns of the region, this structure was different due to its incorporation of a cupola for the community bell.\textsuperscript{104}

In the 1820s and 1830s, following the death of Mother Lucy, the Shakers undertook a building program to erect new dwelling houses or expand old structures. The Shakers built these commodious structures to prevent overcrowding and to anticipate the growth of Shaker families.\textsuperscript{105} For example, in the 1830s, the Church Family enlarged and modified its dwelling houses, the South Family built a new dwelling; and the Shakers expanded the North Family dwelling house in 1845 from 60 x 45 feet to 120 x 45 feet.\textsuperscript{106} (Figures 7-19.) These later additions and construction also facilitated the Ministry’s emerging efforts to regulate Shaker daily life.\textsuperscript{107} These later dwelling houses came to exemplify the communal aspects of Shaker life.

Larger numbers of Shakers allowed for the duplication of interior features such as separate staircases, hallways, and sitting rooms for the brothers and sisters to ensure that the two sexes would not meet within the house except at organized meetings, for meals, and for worship. The dwellings allowed for communal work and worship, but also kept the number of residents manageable so that the elders could maintain control and supervision.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{104}Meader, 1966, 36. The relevance of the cupola will be discussed later in this chapter.
\textsuperscript{105}Hayden, 1976, 76.
\textsuperscript{106}Nicoletta, 1996, 52.
\textsuperscript{107}See Chapter 5 for a greater discussion.
\textsuperscript{108}Nicoletta, 2003, 359.

Figure 7-18: Detail showing of New Lebanon’s Church Family’s Dwelling House c. 1865. Source: Irving, Photographer [attributed]. View of New Lebanon Church Family. Manuscript: NOC 12583. c. 1865.
The Shakers built these new structures, as well as structures such as meeting houses and workshops, to reinforce the segregation of the sexes by deliberately constructing their interiors to support the division of different genders. For example, the Shakers constructed dual staircases, and within these buildings, men’s rooms were deliberately located on one side of the hall and women’s on the other.\textsuperscript{109} These structures were also designed to monitor and limit the Believers’ activities. For example, the integration of limited storage space in the design of these buildings limited the personal possessions a Shaker could accumulate.\textsuperscript{110} After 1832, the Church Family dwelling house contained sixteen rooms housing eighty-one Believers, an average of five Believers per room.\textsuperscript{111}

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\begin{itemize}
\item [\textsuperscript{109}]Koomler, 2000, 64-65.
\item [\textsuperscript{111}]Brewer, 1986, 69.
\end{itemize}
Such a concentration of people produced significant noise and activity, quite in contrast to popular perception of the Shakers.\textsuperscript{112} These larger dwelling house structures incorporated dining facilities and a large meeting room for regular worship services. The second dwelling house at the North Family illustrates the increasing sophistication and division of tasks in the dwelling house. The basement was used for food preparation, storage and dining and included a water-cooled room for the preservation of foodstuffs serviced by the Shakers’ elaborate reservoir and aqueduct system (figures 7-20, 7-21, 7-22). Other floors were used to accommodate Believers with the first floor containing meeting rooms, and each upper floor typically containing an Eldress/Elder’s room and other retiring rooms (figures 7-23 and 7-24).\textsuperscript{113} The Shakers furnished these rooms sparsely, but adapted them to reflect changing worldly influences.\textsuperscript{114} The fashions and designs of the world influenced even Shaker furniture makers.\textsuperscript{115} The design of the Shaker Chair, an iconic Shaker symbol, varied based on use, regional influence, and whether the Shakers (or their workers) made it for community use or sale. One can even tell where a chair was built by its finial.\textsuperscript{116}

Avoiding superfluity was a general concern in the design of Shaker dwelling houses. As dominant structures in the Shaker landscape, these buildings were readily apparent to the World’s People and stood as symbols of Shaker life. The decision to add a

\textsuperscript{112}As Brewer writes, Elder Issachar Bates found the Watervliet Dwelling house distressingly loud. (Ibid, 71.)

\textsuperscript{113}See Nicoletta, 2003, 363.

\textsuperscript{114}There is no evidence to suggest that the Shakers ever outfitted their rooms in completely Shaker-made objects. Koomler, 2000, 66; 84.

\textsuperscript{115}Koomler, 2000, 85.

\textsuperscript{116}Dana Rae Hooten. Shaker Furniture during the Development of the Shaker Movement in America. Master’s Thesis. California State University, Long Beach, August 1987


cupola and bell to the Church Family dwelling house raised just such issues. The cupola, which was to become recognized as a distinctive feature of the Church Family dwelling house, was not without controversy when first constructed.\footnote{Anderson, 1969, 231}

Garret [and] John Dean returned from Albany and brought a new Bell weighing 420 [pounds] for our dwelling house. This Bell has been in contemplation for some time; as doubts were entertained concerning the propriety of introducing into the Church an instrument so noted for its sounding popularity in a noisy world; but considering its benefits, when under proper order, in preserving order in the Church, by calling the family up at the appointed time in the morning, giving notice of meal times, meeting times, [etc] it is admitted as a useful implement, and preferable to blowing a trumpet.\footnote{Records kept by Order of the Church. Manuscript: NN Manuscript: Item 7. 1780-1855:117.}

While ultimately the Shakers resolved the controversy around the cupola, clearly there were often differing ideals of village appearance and how to express the Shaker covenant visually. The Shakers struggled to balance appropriately manifesting their beliefs against pragmatic concerns.\footnote{Please see the discussion in Chapter 5.} These controversies were not limited to the dwelling house. Decisions around the First and Second meeting houses at New Lebanon also resulted in much discussion concerning how to represent Shaker spiritual and social beliefs. These structures readily reflect the influence of the World’s People in both form and construction technology.

**Meeting House**

In 1882, the Reverend Noah Porter, president of Yale College, argued that the meeting house was a focal point for New England community development, serving as a
nucleus for community energies and demonstrating a community’s ‘arrival’.120 Akin to the New England communities from whence many early Shakers originated, the Shaker settlement at New Lebanon had a meeting house at its core.121 Further, like meeting houses throughout New England, the building was not considered a ‘church,’ as that term referred to an elect membership.122

The Shaker meeting house drew upon New England conventions for meeting house construction including widely held presuppositions concerning simplicity, form, and construction technology. Both the 1785 and 1822-24 Meeting Houses were simple in artistry and ornamentation, in keeping with New England construction styles.123 The oblong shape of both structures reflected the dominant model in New England of meeting house construction after 1720.124 Moreover, the architecture of the meeting houses also drew on earlier antecedents both in New England and in other Protestant communities. The emphasis on simplicity could be found in many European Protestant houses of worship. For example, simplicity marked the French Huguenot temple in Lyons (France) which contained only a few tables and some stained glass for decoration while the one at Charenton incorporated significant open interior spaces (figure 7-25).125 The Puritans, too, built structures that reflected their belief that God required simplicity, purity and a

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122 See the discussion in Porter, 1933, 13 and Sprunger, 1997, 40.
lack of pretension in design.\textsuperscript{126}

The 1785 Meeting House was similar to the meeting houses of other denominations. The 44 x 35 foot, two and a half storey, rectangular structure provided separate entrances for Brothers and Sisters. As Sprigg notes, this dual nature would later be reflected in most large Shaker structures.\textsuperscript{127} These symmetrical dual entrances were similar to those found in the design of meeting houses for other denominations such as the Quakers. Several surviving early Quaker meeting houses are similar in design, including the meeting houses at Birmingham, PA (1763) and Buckingham, PA (1767) (figures 7-26 and 7-27). This first structure also had its main entrance in its longest side,

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure7-25.png}
\caption{
}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{126} Sprunger, 1997, 39.
\textsuperscript{127} Sprigg, 1986, 17.

which was in keeping with New England convention in the Revolutionary period. The general model for Quaker meeting houses at this time was a two-storey rectangular wood frame structure with separate entrances for the different sexes and an open large first floor meeting room. The Puritan model for a meeting house was also of a similar rectangular shape.

This Meeting House, built by a Shaker Brother named Moses Johnson, was a hybrid of contemporary thinking and construction techniques. This building, along with all of Johnson’s other early meeting houses, integrated elements of both the Anglo-Dutch styles of the Hudson Valley and the southern shore of Connecticut, particularly English style gambrel roofs and the closely spaced beams and knee braces of Dutch construction. The pitch of the meeting house gambrel was similar that of the Connecticut English gambrel roof. Interior images from one of Johnson’s other meeting houses (Sabbathday Lake) reveals a similarity to Dutch American interiors (figures 7-28, 7-29, and 7-30). Further, the framing style of another meeting house reflects the influence of Dutch framing design (figures 7-31 and 7-32).

This First Meeting House became the model for other Shaker communities, in the

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128 Sinnott, 1963, 23.
130 Sprunger, 1997, 49.
132 Nicoletta, 1996, 35.
134 Following the construction of the meeting house at New Lebanon in 1786, Johnson supervised the construction of meeting houses at Watervliet (1791), Enfield, Conn (1791), Harvard Mass (1792), Canterbury, NH (1792), Shirley Mass (1793), Enfield NH (1793), and Sabbathday Lake (1793). Schiffer, 1979, 8.

Figure 7-29: Seventeenth Century Anglo American Interior. Note the beam structure on the ceiling. Source: Zink, 1987, 270.

Figure 7-30: Seventeenth Century Dutch American Interior. Note the beam structure on the ceiling and the anchor braces. Source: Zink, 1987, 269.

Figure 7-32: Dutch Anchor Bracing Styles. Source: Zink, 1987, 270.
process creating a means of standardizing Shaker places. The use of a gambrel-roofed meeting house, as style particular to the Hudson Valley, at other Eastern communities attests to the general success of disseminating a particular vision of how Shakerism should appear. The construction of the meeting house was designed to create a focus for community identity and worship, moving the focus of worship from the individual to a built structure.\(^{135}\) The 1785 structure also included seating for the World’s People. This by itself reveals Shaker awareness that a symbiotic relationship between their community and the World’s People was necessary to sustain the community.

It was the Second or New Meeting House that would dominate and become a symbol of the New Lebanon Shaker village (figure 7-33). Most Shaker villages contributed to its construction (Appendix E). The Shakers deliberately delayed the construction of the new edifice until the passing of Mother Lucy on February 7, 1821 out of respect for her desire to remain in the old meeting house until her death.\(^ {136}\) The construction of the meeting house served as a symbol for the new era of Shakerism following the death of Mother Lucy. There were also pragmatic concerns. The Shakers at New Lebanon, where a rapid growth in membership occurred, required a larger meeting house.\(^ {137}\) The plans for the meeting house were initiated on Christmas 1821, construction began on November 4, 1822, and the structure was completed in May 1824.\(^ {138}\)

Similar to the first structure, the Second Meeting House drew upon worldly

\(^{135}\)Proctor-Smith, 1985, 29 & 119.

\(^{136}\)Grant, 1994, 4.


\(^{138}\)Meader, 1966, 40.
Figure 7-33: Second Meeting house at New Lebanon. Author’s Image. 2003.
models for its design and construction. The structure is notable for its barrel-vaulted roof, surfaced with soldered tin sheets. Seventy-two laminated arched beam trusses held in place by trunnels supported the roof (figures 7-34 and 7-35). The Shakers employed this construction technique to open up floor space for spiritual dance and song. While this type of construction was atypical for the Shakers, they may have derived their work from bridge construction techniques, particularly those used at the Waterford Bridge, the first to span the Hudson River (figure 7-36). Built in 1804 by Theodore Williams Burr, the Waterford Bridge consisted of four arched spans, each of which was more than 150 feet in length. Burr would later patent his design of arched trusses that originated from supporting abutments; the design would come to be used throughout the United States. The curved ceiling also had precedents in other barrel vaulted churches in New England. While not on the main facade, but on the south elevation facing the dwelling house, the Believers also used a triple entrance that was a regular design element for many congregationalist churches in New England after 1800. One can see this form in the Park Hill Meeting House (NH) which remodeled its

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139 Meader, 1966, 40.
140 Trunnels are large wooden pegs. Meader, 1966, 40; Grant, 1994, 6; John Poppeliers. Shaker Meeting house (Second), Building #2 (Shaker Church Family Meeting House: Photographs, Written Historical and Descriptive Data). Washington: Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1963. [HABS NY, 11-NELEB.V, 3-]
142 Meader, 1966, 40; Grant, 1994, 5.
144 Kemp and Hall., 1999, 311-312.
146 Sinnott, 1963, 74.


Figure 7-36: Bridge at Waterford. Late nineteenth century. Private Collection
facade in 1824. This triple entrance is also on the southern side of the building, a New England convention. The shift of the main entrance for Believers to the shorter end of the new structure reflects an architectural trend for church architecture in early nineteenth century New England. The Shaker structure does exhibit a unique element in its retention of two entrance systems: the triple entrance for exclusive use by Believers, and the dual gendered entrance. As with the 1785 Meeting House, the upper floors were reserved as Ministry accommodations. In a letter to the Ministry at South Union, the New Lebanon Ministry described their new meeting house:

Our new meeting house was raised the first week in June - it took nearly 3 days - we were greatly blest and protected from harm. It is a noble looking frame 80 by 60 feet, one storey high, with an arching roof which the brethren are covering with tin. On the south end there is a porch which extends 27 feet further and 34 feet breadth. In this the Ministry will be well accommodated.

The meeting room is not cumbered with stairs nor pillars, it is wholly supported by the arches above, an is an uncommon firm and is greatly admired both by Believers and the world.

The meeting room was 63 by 78 feet and due to the construction methods employed, it was not obscured by posts that would limit Shaker worship. Again, there was a deliberate incorporation of seating for the World’s People. The building was also designed to limit the actions of the World’s People; the new meeting house was set back twenty-six and a

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150 In 1851, the Ministry oversaw the instillation of four louvered windows to enable the observation of the worship unobserved by Believers and the World’s People. Nicoletta, 2003, 362.

half feet and the yard surrounding the structure was fenced to limit the World’s People from wandering around the community.\textsuperscript{152} In a letter written to the Ministry at Canterbury, the Ministry observed that the World’s People had shown much interest in the new structure: “. . . the world admire it much, but this we should care but little about if they would only keep a due distance and not throng us half so much as they do on this account.”\textsuperscript{153} There were internal community concerns that the new meeting house would be problematic for Believers: that the structure would attract additional unwanted interest from the World’s People or that it could be seen as an act of prideful indulgence.\textsuperscript{154} The debate concerning the materials to be used and the final appearance continued through the construction process with the design changing several times.\textsuperscript{155} The debate was prolonged because the meeting house was a Shaker symbol of God’s Kingdom on Earth. The Second Meeting House also demonstrated the supremacy and power of New Lebanon over other villages, particularly the villages in the mid-western United States.\textsuperscript{156}

A surviving manuscript account supports Nicoletta’s assertion. In a document designing the new meeting house for Watervliet, the size of Watervliet’s meeting house was compared to the New Lebanon meeting house: 46, 183 cubic feet less that the meeting house at New Lebanon.\textsuperscript{157} The meeting house was not the only structure used by both

\textsuperscript{152}Grant, 1994, 6.
\textsuperscript{154}Grant, 1994, 7.
\textsuperscript{155}Ibid, 5-7
\textsuperscript{156}As Nicoletta notes, the decision of Pleasant Hill to built a monumental meeting house in 1820 may have been an impetus for New Lebanon to build a New Structure. Nicoletta, 1996, 41-42
\textsuperscript{157}“Dimensions [sic] of the Meeting house at Holy Mount.” c. 1848. in Inventory of the money and stock held at the beginning of each year. Manuscript: OCIWhi II B 38, 1839-1864.
Believers and the World’s People. The Shaker Office served as the official gateway between the World and the Believers.

The Office

The ‘Office’ of the Shaker Community was a liminal place. Within a Shaker village, access by the ‘World’s People’ to many places, such as workshops and the dwelling houses, was limited. The Office served an analogous role to the antebellum parlor in that it was the place for meeting and greeting visitors. It was one of the few places in which members of the World’s People, could view how Shaker communal life and belief was expressed physically. Beyond the Meeting Houses, which incorporated amenities for the World’s People, the World’s People could avail themselves of information about the Shakers in the Office. The Shakers typically built their Offices along main roads to engage the World’s People and minimize the impact on the rest of the community. It was often the first structure updated and remodeled as it was the initial place of contact for many people. Nowhere is this more evident than at Hancock Shaker village (Massachusetts), five miles from New Lebanon. While outside the time period and location of this analysis, it does give a profound sense of changes the Shaker undertook to appear modern and stands as one of the most visible and surviving examples. In the Victorian period, the Shakers heavily remodeled an older Trustee’s Office to make it more contemporary (figures 7-37 and 7-38). Both the interior and exterior of an Office was constructed to reflect a Shaker community’s property and

158Promey, 1993, 128.
159Koomler, 2000, 55.
160Ibid.
Figure 7-37: Hancock Village Office. c. 1880. Source: Koomler, 2000, 56.

comforts.\textsuperscript{161} The structure was designed with overnight accommodations for visitors from the World, dining facilities, and a store for the sale of Shaker goods. The Shakers built the New Lebanon Church Trustee’s Office in 1827. It would later hold the post office established in 1861. The store at New Lebanon sold many products, including nails, cloaks, candlesticks, leather goods, wood products, wooden shovels, whips, hoes, boxes, seeds, copperware, and felt hats.\textsuperscript{162} New Lebanon differed from many Shaker communities in that it had three Offices: one at the Church Family near the meeting house, one at the South Family, and one at the North Family. The Shakers designed these structures to facilitate access for interested parties.\textsuperscript{163} This theme of continued connectivity with the World’s People also found expression in the industrial and agricultural complexes, which in the antebellum period, dominated New Lebanon Shaker village.

\section*{Agriculture and Industry}

Shaker villages can also be understood as industrial and commercial landscapes. Structures associated with large-scale agriculture and industrial life dominated the antebellum Shaker village at New Lebanon. Agricultural buildings were a commanding presence in Shaker villages that generated significant public interest.\textsuperscript{164} Shaker barn

\textsuperscript{161}Ibid, 82.

\textsuperscript{162}Koomler, 2000, 108.

\textsuperscript{163}As one contemporary observer wrote, “[w]e entered [the office] without knocking. A smell of herbs and of much scrubbed pine boards, of which every part of the house seemed constructed, greeted our senses. There was a little office on either side of the entry. We entered one. A broad-brimmed hat on a nail, and by its side a pre Adamite coat, were the most conspicuous items. On the window sill, however, was a New York Paper, a sign that the brethren have not cut off all links with the ‘World’s People.’”\textit{The Shaker Settlement at New Lebanon (from the Boston Transcript).} Supplement to the Courant Vol. XIII. No. 22. November 4, 1848. Hartford. 174.

construction was promoted and discussed in *The Genesee Farmer* and *The American Agriculturalist* as a model for emulation.\(^{165}\) While most Shaker barns were larger versions of vernacular styles, the Shakers also built some of the most remarkable agricultural buildings in the United States. The late antebellum period was marked by the construction of one of the most conspicuous buildings at New Lebanon: the North Family’s Great Stone Barn. Completed in 1859 and designed by Elder George Wickersham, the Great Stone Barn was one of the largest agricultural buildings in the country. The structure was imposing: it stood 196 feet long by 50 feet wide, with five floors and three additional wings (figures 7-39, 7-40, and 7-41).\(^{166}\) Access was possible on three of its four levels.\(^{167}\) The barn had room for seventy cows, stores for winter forage, manures, and agricultural tools. It also contained internal silos. Such a building reflects the scope and scale of Shaker enterprise. Again, like the other Shaker structures, it stood as a symbol of Shakerism as a path to profit and salvation. Often overshadowed by the Great Barn was the Second Family’s Sister’s Workshop and Barn, also a remarkable structure. While in a ruinous state when documented in 1930, it nonetheless attests to the scale and sophistication of the original building’s design (figure 7-42). By 1850, the Shaker community at New Lebanon had seventeen barns with a total of 35,000 square feet and three granaries with a total of 5,000 square feet of storage space.\(^{168}\)

Industrial structures, notably mills and shops, dominated Shaker villages and New

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\(^{165}\)Nicoletta, 1996: 89.


\(^{167}\)Nicoletta, 1996, 96

Figure 7-39: Early image of the Great Stone Barn. Source: Irving, Photographer. Shaker Village, Mt Lebanon, NY. Manuscript: MPH S12 (#1020) P64. c. 1865.

Figure 7-41: Interior of the Great Stone Barn. Source: [Interior of the Great Stone Barn.] Manuscript: MPH S-121 (#880). No date.

Lebanon was no exception. The Shakers transformed their landscapes to provide their communities with significant water power for saw mills, grist mills, and many different workshops types. As sites of manufacturing and industry, these structures were built with foundations of stone or brick to support heavy machinery. The technological complexity of these structures was advanced. The washhouse at the North Family integrated vents at the north end of the building, heated rooms, and hideaway racks for drying clothes (figure 7-43). The North Family also had an enlarged drive-shed with a lift for storing equipment on a second floor, a two and a half storey granary, and a saw mill/grist mill. Both the North and Center Families had elaborate and well-constructed Blacksmith shops containing some of the most sophisticated industrial equipment of the day including several large industrial trip hammers (figure 7-44 and 7-45). The Shaker Medicine and Herb Factory dominated the Center Family and surviving images attest to the scale and technological sophistication of the operation. Lossing’s 1857 account included several detailed images of the equipment in this factory (figures 7-46). Even the more generic workshops were impressive due to their scale and integration into the sophisticated hydrological power system including the Sister’s and Brother’s Church Family shops, and the North Family’s Brother’s shop, itself an enlarged version of the Church Family Shop (figures 7-47 and 7-48). When taken as a whole, these structures contradict narratives that stereotyped Shaker communities as simple and isolationist. The sophistication also represented a challenge to New Lebanon. A sufficiently skilled work force sustained the initial development of industry at New Lebanon but in the post-

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169 Nicoletta, 1996, 104.
170 Lossing, 1857; Gifford, 1989.

Figure 7-44: Centre Family Blacksmith Shop. Author’s Image. 2003.

Figure 7-45: Triphammer in the collection of the Shaker Museum and Library. Author’s Image. 2004.

Figure 7-47: Brethren’s Workshop. Church Family. Author’s Image. 2003.

Figure 7-48: Workshop. North Family. Note the similarity in design between the Church Family and North Family Structures. Author’s Image. 2003.
1840 period, industrial technology was dominated by cast iron and steel machinery. To remain technologically and economically sustainable in an increasingly competitive market, the Shakers relied upon a number of “non-Shaker engineers, mechanics, and marketing systems.”172 Between 1844 and 1865, the Shakers at New Lebanon imported and integrated numerous technologically sophisticated machines to carry out the pressing, grinding, and boiling involved in herb production.173 These industrial and agricultural structures and related equipment, far from symbolizing that the Shakers saw “work as religion,” display the more pragmatic and symbiotic relationship between the Shakers and the World’s People. The economic dimension to their relationship gave some Shakers pause and, in marked contrast to the industrialized places of the Shakers, a new meeting ground, known as the Mount of Olives, stood as a symbol for the Shaker spiritualist movement arguing for the need to return to more spiritual values.

The Holy Mount

During Mother Ann’s Work (1838-1848), the Shakers actively created new places of worship within their communities. Mother Ann’s Work generated Worldly curiosity in Shaker religious practices, resulting in meetings overflowing with spectators.174 In response, and under the guise of purification, the New Lebanon meeting house was closed in 1842 to all but Believers, sparking a angry response from the neighbouring community.175 As part of this, sacred writing was placed before the meeting house,

172 Andrew John Vadnais. Machines Among the Shakers: The Adoption of Technology by the Mount Lebanon Community 1790-1865. MA Thesis: University of Delaware, 1990: 5-6
173 Ibid, 42-43.
explaining the Shakers’ action (figures 7-49 and 7-50)(Appendix F).

The expression of the new spiritual beliefs during the period of Mother Anne’s was also manifested in physical form in a place district from all other forms of Shaker construction. A new sacred place was created during the revival: the Feast Ground. The new meeting or feast grounds were built by the Shakers in each village on nearby hills or mountain tops. At New Lebanon, the meeting ground, known as the Mount of Olives, was located on nearby Mount Lebanon. In 1842, Youngs noted that, “Some hands went up to the mountain, to fix the road between here & the Dole lot. A new & singular event is about taking place: the Lot is consecrated to be a meeting ground.” The creation of these new places originated from a spirit vision received by Philemon Stewart. Height has long been a mythical symbol of the divine: “In mythology and mysticism, men and women regularly reach for the sky, and devise rituals and techniques of trance and concentration that enable them to put these [religious] ascension stories into practice and ‘rise’ to a ‘higher’ state of consciousness.”

The act of creating these new places for Shaker worship transformed aspects of Shaker life and Shaker villages. The Shakers held the first semi-annual meeting, known as a Feast, in the spring of 1842. At these meetings, Believers received spiritual food and gifts in an elaborate act of spiritual blessing. These feasts also included purification rites and a pilgrimage march. The Shakers closely recorded these activities;

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177 Youngs, 1834-1846, 1842 April 20.
178 Armstrong, 2006, 22.
179 De Vinne, 2003, 226.
180 Stein, 1995, 353.
Figure 7-49: Design for Shaker signs. Records kept by Order of the Church. Manuscript: NN Manuscript: Item 7. 1780-1855: 196.

Figure 7-50: The Shaker Signs (Hancock Shaker Village Collection) Author’s Image - 2003.
consequently, it is possible to undertake a sequential re-creation of these rituals. These activities included all members of the community, “excepting the infirm and the children”\textsuperscript{181} and served as an important community building exercise:

The [Church] went on the Holy Mount, to the feast ground, and we had a very good time. The time was well filled up with various gifts [and] exercises Singing marching, kneeling, and much speaking by various ones. and there was considerable communication from the spirits by Inspiration thro different Instruments.\textsuperscript{182}

It was here that Philemon Stewart would also receive the new Revelation of God known as the \textit{Sacred and Holy Roll}, the document that would articulate the narratives of the period.\textsuperscript{183}

This site became a model for other communities as Elders from other communities were initiated into the rites of the Holy Mount and were instructed to build their own feast grounds. The new meeting ground also attracted the attention of the World’s People. In 1843, two hundred spectators attended one meeting.\textsuperscript{184} By 1845, three hundred attended\textsuperscript{185}

The symbolic end to Mother Ann’s Work came with the complete destruction of


\textsuperscript{183} For more discussion of Stewart, please see Chapter 5 and for more discussion on the \textit{Sacred and Holy Roll}, please see Chapter 7.

\textsuperscript{184} Isaac N. Youngs. \textit{A domestic journey of daily occurrences kept by Issac [sic] N. Youngs, January 1, 1834-December 31, 1846}. Contains a detailed record of events at Mount Lebanon, such as worship services and other religious activities, commercial, and industrial activities. Also includes vital information on members. Manuscript: N Box 19 (Vault). 1834-1846: August 13, 1843.

\textsuperscript{185} Records kept by Order of the Church. Manuscript: NN Manuscript: Item 7. 1780-1855: 248-247 (September 28, 1845)
the feast ground. By the time of its demolition, the holy places of Mother Ann’s Work had been in decline for many years. While meetings occurred in the 1850s, including those noted in the Canaan Upper Family journal on June 16, 1850 and in the East Family journal on October 1, 1854, by then most people had abandoned the holy places and rituals. In 1854, the Shakers received a spiritual gift calling them to end the Mountain Meetings. In 1856, Elder Henry Blinn (from Canterbury Shaker Village) noted these events in his diary:

The Marble Slab that was erected in 1843 at great expense to the Society has been broken even with the bed stone, by some unknown person, & at the present time lays inside of the house which is situated on the north side of the grounds. The stone before its removal has been very much injured by breaking the corners & by marring the surface. Three pine trees are growing inside of the outer fence, the only survivors of a row once planted around the entire ground.

Subsequently, the Shakers sought to destroy the places of Mother Ann’s Work, with the removal of shelters, fences, and the sacred tablets. Brother Giles Avery noted the process in one of the Ministry’s journals on June 19, 1861:


188As quoted in Meader, 1962, 9.

The Ministry and Elders of the first order with 5 other hands [and] one yoke of cattle to draw water go up to the ‘Holy Mount’ to clean up the desecrated meeting house there [and] work all day, get it thoroughly cleaned. Elder Daniel and Giles subsequently buried the monumental stone containing the inscription erected there in 1842 in the month of July. Thus in 19 years is there such a change in feelings of [the] society as . . . could not have been believed at the time of the erection of this sacred tablet.190

Thus ended the built legacy of Mother Ann’s Work.

**A Model for Others**

The modifications made to the physical environment of New Lebanon throughout the antebellum period, and the discourses that informed these changes, were deliberately exported to other communities. As discussed, Moses Johnson meeting houses dominated many eastern communities but this is not to imply the Shakers copied them exactly, each community’s constructions reflected materials available, the time of the community’s founding, geographic location, and the ability of the builders.191 Maintaining an organized and neat community was important to the Shakers. As noted by the apostate Haskell,

> [t]hey are remarkably neat and clean in their houses and door yards. Their circumstances force them to it. Disease would be the effect of uncleanliness in their dwellings, as many are the inhabitants of them. They have, in this respect, many advantages over the ‘world.’ . . . Their work shops are orderly and clean, which is owing to this, there is an order to that purpose, and time granted to comply with it. In short, they are an example to the ‘world’ in this respect, and they have the credit of it.192

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191 Schiffer, 1979, 8.

192 William Haskell. *Shakerism Unmasked: or a History of the Shakers*. Pittsfield: Published by the Author, 1828: 221.
The appearance of the community was very important to the Shaker leadership. “To an exterior cleanliness every attention is paid; and whoever is disposed to be negligent, is reprobated in severe terms.”\textsuperscript{193} This sentiment also found expression in the various versions of the Millennial Laws. The Shakers intended these rules and regulations to standardize the appearance of Shaker villages to reinforce religious and social norms.\textsuperscript{194} While the Shakers, particularly those in western villages, did not universally accept the Millennial Laws, the strong similarities in Shaker landscapes, including in the built form, demonstrate that these rules were influential on Shaker design and thought.\textsuperscript{195} Particularly influential were those provisions that sought to ensure neat and organized Shaker villages.\textsuperscript{196}

The regulations promoted a more uniform look for all Shaker villages, not only at New Lebanon. The 1821 Millennial Laws addressed the appearance of the Shaker property: “it is considered good order to lay out and fence all kinds of lots, fields and gardens in a square form where it is practicable, but the proportion, as to length and width may be left to the discretion of those who direct the work.”\textsuperscript{197} Even the condition of dwelling houses and door yards was dictated.\textsuperscript{198} This can be seen as an effort to maintain a neat appearance and to set Shaker villages apart from the more disordered nature of many other communities. For example, the 1842 Holy Orders of the Church set

\textsuperscript{193}Ibid, 176.
\textsuperscript{194}Nicoletta, 2003, 355.
\textsuperscript{195}Ibid
\textsuperscript{196}Ibid, 356. See the discussion in Chapter 5
\textsuperscript{197}Milenial [sic] Laws, or Gospel statutes and ordinances adapted to the day of Christ’s second Appearing, Given [and] established in the Church, for the protection thereof: By the Ministry [and] Elders, New Lebanon, August 7th: 1821. Manuscript: OClWHi I B37 (M1477). August 1821: 49.
\textsuperscript{198}Milenial [sic] Laws, 1821: 50.
out ‘spiritual’ instructions concerning the use of paint and varnish. The 1845 revisions to the Millennial Laws also contained detailed instructions concerning the appearance of interiors. This document included instructions on the colour of bedsteads, comforters, curtains, the types of books, and what items could be hung on the walls. There was also an expanded section on “Prudence Neatness, and Good Economy.” The 1845 Millennial Laws also reflected many sections of the Holy Laws of Zion, including the sections on paint and varnishing. However, as discussed previously, these regulations were limited in their use. The Shakers removed or revised many sections of the 1845 Millennial Laws in the 1860 Millennial Laws.

The Shakers at New Lebanon considered it important to maintain consistent narratives across their American communities and sought to ensure that not only all Shakers but also the World’s People could read these narratives. These efforts in themselves demonstrate the sophisticated nature of the Shaker network and the important role played by New Lebanon.

Conclusion: Manifesting Belief in Physical Form

The Shakers constantly struggled to be in the World while not of it. Their road to
Zion entailed constant improvement and reconsideration.\textsuperscript{204} Shaker design was as much about custom, purpose, and function as theology but towards the end of the antebellum period the Shakers’ self imposed ‘separation’ from the World became increasingly artificial for many of its members.\textsuperscript{205} Nevertheless, the Shakers continued to use the material world, including the cultural landscapes of their villages, to express their beliefs.\textsuperscript{206}

The seemingly peaceful and ordered nature of Shaker villages struck many people. Even apostates in the later antebellum period remarked that Shaker villages were models of efficiency and order (figure 7-51).\textsuperscript{207} The Shakers were keenly aware of the

\textbf{Figure 7-51:} Late Nineteenth Century Image of New Lebanon Shaker Village. Author’s Collection.

\textsuperscript{204} Hayden, 1976, 41.
\textsuperscript{205} Stein, 1992, 141; Anderson 1969, 32.
\textsuperscript{206} Savulis, 1998, 127.
\textsuperscript{207} De Wolfe, 2002, 156.
value of a positive image.208 Areas in public view merited special attention. As Stein notes, this promoted the Shaker message and represented a transformation from the “apocalyptic proclamations of their founders.”209 The design and organization of the villages also distinguished the Shakers from the World’s People, and with its defined boundaries helped to control the interaction between the two groups.210 However, the Shakers also designed the buildings at New Lebanon to evoke an emotional response:

Buildings are more than mere structures, more than simple houses and barns and stores and factories. Even for people uninitiated in the rituals of construction or untutored in the lessons of architectural history, certain structures can evoke a range of powerful effects. A building can welcome or intimidate, sometimes making the visitor feel important or insignificant. Some edifices exercise aesthetic, even religious, powers.211

While the design and the development of the Shaker physical environment reflects the context in which it existed, it was also profoundly influence by the Shaker understanding of their covenantal obligations.212 Further, the environment created by the Shakers illustrates the symbiotic nature between the Shakers and the World’s People that has previously not been substantially recognized.213

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208Eve Kahn. “Hands to Work, Hearts to God.” ICON, Fall 2003: 11
209Stein, 1992, 118.
211Grant, 1994, 3.
212Ibid.
CHAPTER EIGHT
DISSEMINATING THE VISIONS OF ZION FROM NEW LEBANON

Introduction

New Lebanon, as the nexus of Shakerism, was more than a spiritual place; it was the governing centre of Shakerism. The New Lebanon Ministry was in a paradoxical position: it was at once very much ‘in the World’ yet required to be ‘not of it.’¹ To function in the World, Shaker communities required sophisticated leaders with considerable political acumen. Moreover, the Shaker leadership had to contend both with an often hostile environment and competing expressions of Shaker covenantal obligations found in other Shaker communities throughout the United States (figure 1-1). The Ministry used a variety of means to exert its authority, including community visits, written correspondence, circular epistles, prescriptive rules and regulations, published works, and cartography. The aim of such efforts was not only the protection and spiritual growth of Believers, but also the creation of an imagined community that illustrated the ideals of the Shaker covenant. While the Shakers may not have used such terminology, the construction of place and interpretation by both Believers and the ‘World’s People’ was an important element in New Lebanon’s engagement with other Shaker communities and with the World at large. How both Believers and the ‘World’s People’ understood Shaker communities was also a preoccupation for the Ministry at New Lebanon, and this too found expression in their various texts.

¹The Ministry at New Lebanon is also denoted in this chapter as the New Lebanon Ministry, and the Central Ministry.
Placing New Lebanon:

New Lebanon had a greater leadership role beyond its ascribed function as a spiritual leader. Theoretically, all Shaker villages across the United States were autonomous. Guimond, in his account of the Shaker hierarchical structure, outlines what scholars commonly understand to have been New Lebanon’s relationship with the other Shaker villages:

The New Lebanon Ministry was the final authority or ‘Lead’ for the entire Shaker religion, but they directly supervised the activities of only the New Lebanon and Watervliet societies: other Shaker communities were directed by ministries which were “appointed to preside over them” by the Central Ministry.2

The written covenant refers to New Lebanon as the primary spiritual authority and published antebellum Shaker works such as Green and Wells support this understanding as does commentary from an outside observer in 1832.3 The perception of New Lebanon as only a spiritual authority has also permeated many contemporary works. This includes the work of scholars such as Anderson who states that the other Shaker societies generally administered themselves.4 It must be understood, however, that the written covenant and published antebellum Shakers works were official works representing a public statement on the role of New Lebanon in the context of attacks from members of

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the predominantly Protestant American community who considered Shakerism a form of Catholicism or ‘Popery.’\textsuperscript{5} As a result, the Shaker leadership was keen to distance Shakerism from the Catholic Church’s hierarchical model. This sentiment can be found in Green and Wells, who described the Catholic Church in negative terms and distinguished Shaker belief from Catholicism in all its forms.\textsuperscript{6} The very act of creating an official position proves that the Shakers did actively engage in creating official narratives and suggests that the broader community in which the Shakers lived understood and engaged these narratives.

The role of the leadership at New Lebanon was more complex than was commonly understood or reflected in official Shaker statements. The New Lebanon Ministry was responsible for appointing and removing Elders; addressing apostates; developing economic strategies; working with non-Shaker civic authorities; and opening and closing villages.\textsuperscript{7} The general principal that the New Lebanon Ministry appointed the first Elder and Eldress of any Shaker village brought ‘into gospel order’ reinforced this greater role.\textsuperscript{8} Additionally, New Lebanon, as home to the Central Ministry, represented the highest authority (both civic and spiritual) on the temporal plane.\textsuperscript{9} As part of this hierarchical relationship, other Shaker Ministries had to communicate regularly with New Lebanon.\textsuperscript{10} Those that did not, often received inquiries as to the status of their

\textsuperscript{5} See Pearsall, 2001, 1113
\textsuperscript{6} Green and Wells, 1823.
\textsuperscript{10} Paterwic and Hadd, 1996, 5.
communities and the Believers under their care. The New Lebanon Ministry expected that the other Ministries would travel annually to New Lebanon to learn of new policies, regulations, and rituals.\textsuperscript{11}

The authority of the New Lebanon Ministry was a target for both apostates and some of the ‘World’s People,’ but these efforts to undermine and attack the Shakers again reflects New Lebanon’s authority. The apostate Haskell captures this in his observation: “when a ‘gift’ or ‘order’ comes from the ministry, none dare oppose it, however inconsistent it may appear, both with reason and common sense.”\textsuperscript{12} New Lebanon provided the model for all other communities and the New Lebanon leadership played a more dominant role than many popular writers and scholars have postulated. In fact, the influence of New Lebanon pervaded the material culture of all Shaker communities:

The community at New Lebanon was influential in shaping the visual World of the Shakers – clothing, buildings, village planning, and household articles of all sorts. For the sake of union, Shaker communities sought to look alike, as well as to think, act, and worship alike.\textsuperscript{13}

In her analysis of Elder Henry Blinn’s manuscript history of Canterbury Shaker Village (New Hampshire), Sprigg describes the efforts of the Canterbury leadership to prevent deviation in material culture from New Lebanon models.\textsuperscript{14} Poppeliers too notes that the archetypal patterns established at New Lebanon were exported to other communities, which then adapted these patterns to specific contexts.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{11}Brewer, 1986, 59.
\textsuperscript{12}Haskell, 1828, 167.
\textsuperscript{13}Sprigg, 1986, 16.
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid, 18.
\textsuperscript{15}Poppeliers, 1974, 10.
New Lebanon played an important role in determining the most appropriate means for interpreting and fulfilling the Shakers’ covenantal obligations. These understandings of how best to fulfill these obligations articulated at New Lebanon in turn helped to create an imagined community. As discussed in previous chapters, a profound narrative of place articulated as the Shaker covenant was an important structuring device for Shaker life. The interpretation of how best to fulfill this obligation differed over time; it also found expression in the build form and landscapes of the New Lebanon Shaker Village. Another important component of this was the efforts of the Shaker leadership to disseminate these visions and discourses to other communities. Indeed, the Central Ministry actively sought to express their interpretations throughout Shakerdom. What follows is a discussion of the different means of transmitting interpretations of the covenantal obligations.

In its earliest years, the New Lebanon Ministry undertook an annual circuit between villages following a precedent set by Mother Ann’s voyages in New England from 1781-1783 (figure 8-1). These visits were important events. In the Shaker social structure, the New Lebanon Ministry members were considered closest to the divine, and Believers regarded them as celebrities. At Hancock Shaker Village, the local Shakers created a separate entrance for the Ministry into the dwelling house to limit disruption from such a visit. Often, Ministry visits would encompass several different communities, as reflected in a letter to Union Village (Ohio):

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16 Stein, 1992, 66.
Figure 8-1: The Voyages of Mother Ann. After Stein, 1992.
On the 30th of last May we [The Ministry] started on our journey to visit the Eastern believers— we reached Enfield (N.H.) the 4th day. We visited six Societies— staid one sabbath in each, except Shirley,— attended public, or general, meeting in every society— spoke with nearly every person, and returned home July 9th.— We were blessed [and] prospered through the whole of our journey, [and] kindly received by all.¹⁷

Not only did these visits enable the Ministry to openly assess the spiritual and temporal development of communities, it also allowed them to exhort Believers to unity and obedience.

Such visits were sufficiently frequent to warrant the creation of detailed written guides to communities. A surviving example, entitled Roads & Distances between Believers Societies East of Watervliet and New Lebanon, provides directions, including mileage, villages, and road identification.¹⁸ In essence, these documents were nascent versions of road maps, demonstrating a sophisticated knowledge of the non-Shaker World. However, following the reopening of the gospel in 1798 and the expansion of the Shakers into the mid-western United States (Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois), the Shakers village network expanded to beyond what the Ministry could manage through village tours. As a result the Shakers began to develop ways to communicate with other communities including general written communication such as letters, more specific written documents such as circular epistles and regulations, cartographic works, and publishing.


¹⁸ Roads & Distances Between Believers Societies East of Watervliet & New Lebanon. Manuscript: N Box 34, Folder 34. Shaker Collection. No Date.
Written Communication

The expansion of the Shakers, particularly into Ohio, Kentucky, and Illinois, required the development of an extensive written communication system:

The distance to the Ohio Valley . . . forced the Believers to rely on the postal system of the young nation. Letters were exchanged with growing frequency – formal epistles from ministry to ministry, financial advisories to and from the deacons, testimonies, expressions of thanks from families and individuals to Lucy Wright and other leaders, personal greetings among friends. No topic of spiritual or temporal concern escaped comment in these communications.¹⁹

Letter writing became a ‘bureaucratic science’ among the Shakers as is clear from the surviving thousands of letters to and from the Ministry at New Lebanon.²⁰ The Shakers not only kept copies of all correspondence, but also carefully documented when and to whom letters were sent (see samples in Appendix G).²¹ Following the Shakers’ expansion into the mid-western United States, it was this written personal correspondence, combined with circular epistles, written rules and regulations such as the Millennial Laws, printed works, and cartography that were designed by the Shakers to reflect the particular interpretations of how the Shaker Zion should appear and be understood. This written and printed material from the Ministry and Elders at New Lebanon imparted a particular sense of place: in an effort to fulfil their obligations of their covenant with God, the letters from the Ministry and leadership at New Lebanon indicated how Believers should act within Shaker places and how they should relate to each other and

¹⁹Stein, 1992, 66. Stein provides an excellent overview of the western expansion of the Shakers in his work.
²⁰Ibid, 125. ‘Bureaucratic science’ is a term used by Stein to describe the complex letter writing system (and documentation system) that the Shakers developed.
²¹This documentation was undertaken at the same time.
the ‘World’s People.’ The New Lebanon Ministry drew upon its own experience of the competing discourses at New Lebanon for the elaboration of this advice.\textsuperscript{22} While these excerpts are selective, they capture the diverse functions of Shaker written correspondence, including governing control, spiritual exhortation and emotional support.

**Spiritual Exhortation and Emotional Support**

The New Lebanon Ministry was serious and responsible in its role as the Shaker spiritual lead. It was to New Lebanon that other communities turned for spiritual direction and support and this is clear in many of the letters the New Lebanon Ministry sent to other communities. In these letters, the Central Ministry constantly reiterated the importance of unity; Believers were to work together for community benefit. Many early writings from the New Lebanon Ministry to the founders of Shakerism in the mid-western United States, particularly in the correspondence between Mother Lucy and Elder David Darrow, reflect this concern. In 1805, word of the religious revivals in Kentucky and Ohio reached New Lebanon. The New Lebanon leadership saw this as an opportunity for expansion following and building upon the consolidation and organization of the eastern Shaker communities.\textsuperscript{23} Following the initial successes of the first Shaker missionaries to these revivals, the Ministry sent additional Elders to lead the Ohio and Kentucky communities, including Elder David Darrow, upon whose land the village at New Lebanon was partially founded. Elder David, who would remain the

\textsuperscript{22}See Chapter 6.
\textsuperscript{23}Stein, 1992, 57-58.
leader of the western communities for nearly twenty years, established and developed the western communities based on eastern models.24 The surviving written correspondence offers a glimpse into the process of Shaker community development not easily discerned in the eastern communities, established directly and shaped through Ministry visits. The development of the western communities illustrates the first effort of the Shakers to establish an imagined community over great distance. The written words of the Shaker leadership at New Lebanon disseminated to distant Shaker communities were designed to ensure that the places of Shakerism were structured consistently. In a letter to Elder David, Mother Lucy wrote of the importance of maintaining strong, consistent, and knowledgeable leadership with a direct connection to the experiences and practices of the eastern Shakers for the development of a strong foundation for western communities. At the forefront of her concerns was the safety of Elder David himself whose loss would have been devastating for the Shakers as a whole.25 Elder David had a propensity for missionary work with little regard for his own safety.26 The loss of such a leader would break the link between the places of the East and West.

External threats were not the only concern for the New Lebanon Ministry. Internal order was a preoccupation of numerous letters from New Lebanon; the Central Ministry saw disunity among Believers as a menace to the stability and consistency of Shaker life and worship, and by extension, the Shaker covenant.27 This concern was not

24Ibid, 60.
26Stein, 1992, 62.
reserved for leadership in the western Shaker communities. In 1823, there was similar concern in the correspondence sent to the Alfred (Maine) Ministry:

And firstly, be kindly affectioned one towards another. Never look cross, nor speak harsh, and carefully avoid all disunion in your own lot; but if by any means disunion should creep in for mercy’s sake, never hint it to any under your care; for if you do, your power will be gone at once, and some will side with one party, and some with the other; and after all, they will have but little, if any faith with either party. But it ought to be remembered that where a party spirit exists, the spirit and government of Christ does not.28

Moreover, the Ministry at New Lebanon sent these messages of community unity and belief consistency at times deemed trying for other communities. For example, New Lebanon Ministry forwarded the following to the Society at South Union (Kentucky):

O Brethren and Sisters, be faithful, be strong in the way of God; be valient volunteers, fight the good fight of Faith, and flinch not in the hour of temptation; endurants the end, and your victory is certain, and your crown of glory will be immortal. 29

In 1818, Calvin Green, writing for the Ministry, consoled the members of another village over their concerns about the lack of new converts.30

Supporting the outlying communities through spiritual guidance was the principal role of the Ministry at New Lebanon, as the Shakers acknowledged in their publications,

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but New Lebanon’s leadership extended beyond strictly spiritual matters. The Ministry took an active role in governing its various communities, albeit to ensure the maintenance of Shaker spiritual beliefs and to protect their spiritual flock. While regulating secular activities was an extension of the Ministry’s spiritual role, it involved New Lebanon in more pragmatic and dynamic control than is understood by many scholars and popular writers.

**Government**

Efforts to govern the distant Shaker villages reveals how the Ministry at New Lebanon sought to express its understanding of the Shaker covenant. Beyond spiritual exhortation, these works instructed Believers on worship and the appearance of communities. Such instructions often related to how communities might interact with the World. Good and hierarchical government was a concern to the Shaker Leadership:

> For where there is no head of influence, there can be no government, and where there is no government, there is no God. And in such a state of anarchy the righteous mourn while wicked spirits triumph [and] seek ways [and] means to trample underfoot the good [and] wholesome laws of Zion.31

Consistency between communities was crucial to the Ministry’s government of the far-flung Shaker network and central to this consistency was maintaining a particular sense of place. How Shaker places might appear in the eyes of the World was of importance:

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Believers ought to be very cautious as to what they say and do before the World, especially after gaining any important victory over [the ‘World’s People’]. The people of God ought to be a meek and humble people, striving for peace, and wishing for nothing inconsistent with justice and truth. But if they give way to a high sense, and vaunt over their adversaries, they only provoke them to try again, besides this they get out of their own order by so doing, and are exposed to lose the protection and blessing of God; and the wicked may be suffered to scourge them till they learn humility [at] the feat of God sufficient to be what they profess to be.32

This found particular expression in the Ministry efforts to regulate Shaker worship.

While the Shakers had long accepted spiritual gifts as an important element of Shaker life, the Ministry at New Lebanon often expressed concern about how Believers at all communities received and practiced these gifts.33 Mother Lucy expressed a similar concern nearly twelve years later over the actions of some Believers in the western communities:

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33 See also Chapter 6. “[M]any wonderfull and powerfull gifts of God Shaking Speaking with tongue and many other operations it has had that good affect to search the hearts and shake out sin that never was confess be fore . . . this gift did last about 2 or 3 weeks though they did not Shake every meeting– the Elders would think we had a Gift last night to Shake to night we will have a still regular meeting but the power of God would come upon them so mightily it would brake them all to peases and there Church manner turned into the back manner some Dancing some Shouting Leeping Speaking with Tongues and turning they acted as pritty and as foolish as you ever saw people and all in a gift of God . . . It needs great care that none run wild in their gifts old believers cannot travel long at a time in such gifts before they must gather down into the still small voice– this needs wisdom to no when the gift must seas [sic] for that time– it appears evident that we shall all ways need more or less of the Whirlwind Earthquake and fire as long as we have that in us that must be distroyed . . . This From the Ministry in Lebanon “ “Ministry (New Lebanon). “Letter dated December 5th 1807” Letters - New Lebanon (1804-1809). Manuscript: OClWHi IV A 31. December 5th 1807.
When I read your Letters of August 30th I could not help thinking that the sense of the people was too high and boisterous; and that they had too much of the wind, earthquake, fire, [and] whirlwind... It feels to me that believers in this day (and especially such as are called to labour for Church relation,) ought to feel after the gifts [and] power of God in the “still small voice”. . . . it is of great importance that you establish a right manner of faith [and] sense among that people; for if it is not gained [and] established in your day, it will be very hard for Mother Ruth, or any of your successors to do it, and then they will have, as it were, to lay a new foundation for the people to build upon. As long as there is any of the fallen nature left in believers, they will be more or less exposed (when they have the power in their own hands) to exercise arbitrary government over their inferiors, and this is not all... 34

The Ministry’s concern reflects fear of unstructured worship and erratic spiritual gifts, which were seen to undermine the stability of the community and reinforce negative perceptions about the Shakers. Early Shaker worship under Mother Ann was charismatic, and apostates and enemies amongst the ‘World’s People’ used this to attack the Shakers and their communities. Because strongly expressed spiritual gifts could serve as a destabilizing force in the community and could be used by outsiders to attack Shaker communities, the Shaker leadership sought to create an consistent sense of community. This was undertaken, in part, through careful regulation of worship.

As at New Lebanon Shaker Village, the Ministry and New Lebanon leadership played a key role in the physical appearance and development of other Shaker societies. For the western societies, initially at least, New Lebanon, was both an on-going source of leaders and the nexus that funded, coordinated, and expedited goods to facilitate bringing

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34Lucy Wright.” Copy of a letter from Mother [Lucy Wright] to Father David [Darrow], dated N. Lebanon Sept 21st 1819” Letters - New Lebanon (1816-1819). Manuscript: OClWHi IV A 33. September 21st 1819. The phrase ‘earthquake, fire, [and] whirlwind’ is echoed by Rufus Bishop questioning the fervour of Mother Ann’s Work at New Lebanon nearly twenty years after Mother Lucy’s letter.
the western villages into ‘gospel order.’ This expansion proved a spiritual and financial challenge for the eastern communities, and for New Lebanon in particular which sent many of its most promising members to the western villages.35 In 1805, New Lebanon sent funding to purchase property for the new community along with advice on which property to purchase.36 In February 1806, another letter followed promising material goods to establish a new community, including light furniture, beds and bedding, kitchenware. In part this was for pragmatic reasons, for these goods “will be Cheeper here than their.”37

It was New Lebanon that organized the coordination of financing for eastern communities, such as the Harvard (Mass) Community:

You know that while you was here, we had to assist the believers at Harvard considerable in money, so we have continued to the present time, [and] God has blessed us in it– “The liberal shall live by liberal things [and] it is more blessed to give than to receive” . . .38

In its generosity, the Ministry often sought to coordinate construction and the appearance of other communities down to seemingly mundane details, including in the following example of a letter sent to Kentucky:

One thing we would propose for your consideration, that is, as the porches are added to convene the sick and such like purposes—whither it would not be better to have an outside door to them, and have a partition across a part, or all of it about 3 feet in width which might serve as a closet for the room, to keep necessaries in for the sick, and to keep the room more cleanly; and the inside door would serve to defend the patient from the harshness of the air—be the weather ever so bad.

New Lebanon provided such guidance throughout the antebellum period. In 1859, the New Lebanon Ministry advised the community at Groveland (New York) about the importance of its appearance:

Beloved Ministry, we trust that you will consider Elder Amos to be duly qualified to make any decision or settle any question that may arise in relation to the building and finish of your new house as you can safely confide in his experience and judgement in regard to such matters; and hope that whatever plan or design may be in contemplation, will be laid before him for decision in building, as well as in all other matters of importance, we admire uniformity in form and appearance as far as practicable, and wish to encourage and recommend the same. The size and intended form of Cupola or belfry. . . . we hope will receive a passing notice, and all superfluity and unnessary expense be avoided.

As seen, the Ministry understood the importance of architecture and community appearance as windows onto Shaker values for the ‘World’s People.’

The challenge of making and maintaining Shaker places for the eyes of the ‘World’s People’ found its most profound expression in the New Lebanon Ministry’s highly organized and politically informed response to apostate attacks. These responses

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41See the discussion of architectural and the physical manifestation of Shaker beliefs in Chapter 6.
were designed to protect the Shaker community as a whole from ill-repute. The New Lebanon Ministry tracked speeches and pamphlets hostile to the Shakers. Philemon Stewart recorded the arrival at New Lebanon on April 14, 1833 of a pamphlet containing the speech of W. Wickcliffe, a senator in Kentucky Legislature, against the Pleasant Hill Kentucky Shakers. Mary Dyer was a vocal Shaker apostate and a prolific writer who characterized Shaker villages as cold, uncaring places and Shakers as people who stole children from parents. Her characterizations represented one of the greater threats to the Shakers in the antebellum period. Reflecting on her experiences at Enfield village (New Hampshire), where her children and husband remained as members, Dyer became a *cause célèbre* for many anti-Shaker activists. Dyer’s written and oral attacks on the Shaker communities in New Hampshire were regularly communicated to the Ministry at New Lebanon, which then coordinated a response. This is particularly evident in a letter from the Ministry at New Lebanon in 1824:

> Your proceedings, as far as they have come to our knowledge, respecting Mary Dyer’s inflamatory stuff meets our approbation perfectly . . . We are willing to be all the help we can in this case. We had made arrangements to get those counter testimonies published in the Pittsfield, Albany [and] New York papers . . . We should be very glad to see some of your pamphlets, for we wish to be well prepared to meet whatever Mary Dyer may send into among the World around us. We should think it very right for our brethren in the West to have one in each society, so that they may be prepared, for doubtless Mary’s books are there, or will be soon.44

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43 For a more complete discussion, see De Wolfe, 2002.

Clearly, New Lebanon was making other Shaker villages aware of the long running conflict between the New Hampshire Shakers and Mary Dyer. This included the western villages to the extent that they were willing to disseminate the anti-Shaker narrative (along with documents to refute it including documents prepared by her former husband who had converted to Shakerism) to Believers.\textsuperscript{45} The covering letter to other Shaker villages read,

\begin{quote}
In the next place we shall give you some information about Mary Dyer . . . Last year she published a volume of considerable size, entitled “A portraiture of Shakerism” The first edition being sold off they are, we understand, reprinting it in Boston. Her malice [and] slander are without bounds, [and] her criminal charges against the society are numerous . . . The World are much alarmed, some for [and] others against. Hence the believers in New Hampshire have published a pamphlet to clear their moral character [and] for the information of mankind who wish to know the truth. We intend to send you one before long, unless our brethren in New Hampshire should send one from thence, so that you may be ready to meet whatever that wicked woman may spread around you. Our eastern friends are in trouble, [and] it is our duty to help them if we can. We intend to get these counter testimonies reprinted whenever her inflamatory stuff spreads around us, [and] we hope our brethren in the West will be like-minded.\textsuperscript{46}
\end{quote}

Such apostate attacks could culminate in litigation. In such instances, New Lebanon would provide guidance on relevant case law and precedents involving other communities as in the case of Gass and Banta in which New Lebanon reviewed the case and provided guidance.\textsuperscript{47} However, the New Lebanon leadership was not uncritical in its support. Respecting this issue, they noted that there had never been a similar case in the

\textsuperscript{45}De Wolfe, 2002, 95.


\textsuperscript{47}See Chapter 4 for a greater discussion on Gass and Banta.
east and suggested that perhaps the predicament was the result of deviance from Shaker practice.\textsuperscript{48} A letter from Pleasant Hill to the Ministry at New Lebanon also demonstrates that other Shaker communities actively sought the assistance of the Ministry at New Lebanon.

The relationship with New Lebanon was not one-way dictation. Other Shaker villages sought the official approval of the Ministry, which would respond, usually with a sense of parental love and approval. The New Lebanon Ministry saw itself, and was seen as, the ultimate temporal arbitrator for Shakerism and the principal interpreter of the obligations of the Shaker covenant. As another exchange between two eastern villages shows, there was a sense of deference toward the New Lebanon Ministry: “all we desire is to comply with their wishes.”\textsuperscript{49}

Clearly, written correspondence was an important leadership tool. It allowed the temporal and spiritual direction of widespread communities. Because correspondence between distant communities could be intermittent, the Shakers also found other means of disseminating their views.\textsuperscript{50} Part of the genius of the Shakers was the development of many forms of expression of the vision of Shakerism for the World.

**Circular Epistles and Written Regulations**

Circular epistles and written regulations facilitated a broader understanding of the Shaker covenantal obligations by laying out what the New Lebanon Ministry saw as critical to Shaker communities. In contrast to general correspondence, typically addressed


\textsuperscript{49}Letter From Holy Ground to Chosen Land. Manuscript: MeS Box 10. June 24, 1850.

\textsuperscript{50}See Stein, 1992, 97.
to particular individuals, circular epistles and regulations were aimed at all Believers and developed for distribution throughout the Shaker communities.

Circular epistles were proclamations, official statements from the Ministry at New Lebanon. These documents served a variety of purposes including establishing a particular position on a legal or financial matter, the revision of the written covenants, instructions on how to address members of the ‘World’s People,’ and the statement of rules and order.51 Together, they aimed at an ideal of uniformity: undifferentiated action and appearance within a hostile World:

   to impress upon your minds a due consideration of certain matters which, if rightly improved, will tend to increase our mutual strength [and] protection in the way of God, and promote a spirit of union, order [and] harmony among Believers.52

Beyond the immediate aim of revising the written covenant, the circular epistles were designed to create an imagined community through tractable obedience and ordered unity. It also reaffirmed New Lebanon as the heart of the Shaker Zion and the place of God:

   It is also well known, and ought forever to be remembered, that from this place the law of Zion, and the word of the Lord have gone forth to every place where the testimony of Christ’s second appearing is supported.53

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51 Queries and answers concerning the founders of the Church and Mother Lucy’s sayings. Manuscript: DLC Shaker Collection Item #88. n.d.: 3; Circular Letter of 1829 [sic] concerning revisions of the general covenant. Manuscript: DLC Shaker Collection Item #89. [September 1828].

52 Ministry (New Lebanon). “Circular Epistle The Ministry and Elders of the Church at New Lebanon to all who feel an interest in the prosperity of Zion, and claim a relation to the only gospel of salvation, in this day of Christ’s second appearing.” Letters - New Lebanon (1825-1829). Manuscript: OCWHI IV A 35. September 1, 1829: [1]

53 Ministry (New Lebanon), September 1, 1829, [7-8].
Through the consistent reiterations of the importance of unity, order, harmony, and obedience to one’s spiritual parents, the New Lebanon Ministry, as the spiritual parent to all, was placed at the apex of the social and spiritual hierarchy of Shakerism. A circular from New Lebanon in 1860 particularly highlights the influence of New Lebanon over Shaker communities.\textsuperscript{54} Sabbathday Lake had incurred financial losses due to well-meaning trustees who without the permission of their Elders had borrowed money from the World and then had been unable to repay the debt.\textsuperscript{55} To pay the debt, the New Lebanon Ministry mandated a universal ‘tax’ for all villages:

\begin{quote}
We propose, for the whole Zion on earth to be taxed a little, to pay enough of this debt to enable the society to live, and get strength, gradually to rise out of their present distressed condition . . . \textsuperscript{56}
\end{quote}

That New Lebanon could tax all villages is evidence of the secular power of the Shakers’ spiritual centre.

Similar to circular epistles were the various rules and regulations created at New Lebanon and distributed to other communities. The Millennial Laws along with the spiritual laws created during Mother Ann’s Work such as the Holy Laws of Zion, reinforced particular discourses concerning Shaker place construction, maintenance, and appreciation.\textsuperscript{57} These documents were dynamic, reflected the changing nature of Shaker life and extended to communities beyond New Lebanon. While scholars have questioned

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{54} See Appendix H for full text.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid, 1860.
\textsuperscript{57} See the discussions in Chapter 6.
\end{footnotes}
the influence of the rules and regulations on other communities, the rules were circulated to all Shaker Communities with the expectation that they would be used to guide Shaker life. As surviving examples illustrate, these documents were often circulated under the signature of the leadership at New Lebanon, with instructions that they were to be read annually so that members could not claim ignorance.58 Ultimately, these works, like the circular epistles, represent another forum for Shaker efforts to effect particular visions of the Shaker Zion. The Shakers did not rely solely on the written word; cartography was also used to model the ideal of Shaker life.

**Cartographic Works**

The Shakers commonly used maps and village plans not only to document their communities, but also to share images of each community and to illustrate of the growth of Shakerdom.59 In an age when travel was difficult and costly, these documents were shared between the communities and were valued as vivid portrayals of the development of ‘Zion on Earth’:

And firstly in relation to the Map of your Village— I should be much pleased to get it, but should not advise to send it by Mail just yet; and if you should hereafter, for the want of private conveyance, don’t pay the postage; for if you do, we may lose the Map [and] you the postage with all your labor, and that would be a sad pity. Rufus Bishop60

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58 Brewer, 1986, 40.

59 Lesley Duvall and Sharon Duane Koomler. *In the Shaker Tradition*. Toronto: Sterling Publishing, 2002: 147; Koomler, 2000, 150. For an overview of the Shaker cartographic tradition, Robert Emlen’s *Shaker Village Views*. (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1987) is the standard text. The intent of this section is not to repeat this work, but to highlight how it was used in the context of New Lebanon.

These works were complex ‘village views’ for use as planning and communication tools.\textsuperscript{61} By the 1820s, most Shaker villages were nearing their physical apex, and the maps of this period show the extent and growth of these villages.\textsuperscript{62} The maps of the 1820s and 1830s were dominated by built form which demonstrated the building remodeling program of the day.\textsuperscript{63} They were designed to illustrate Shaker life and served to construct and maintain community identity and memory.\textsuperscript{64} However, while Emlen is right that the maps were not modified once drawn, these documents were used to express a particular understanding of Shakerism. Every map has an author, subject and theme, and also a narrative that uses place, history, symbology, and association.\textsuperscript{65} The Shakers created these documents to demonstrate a particular image of Shaker villages and to disseminate that image amongst Shakers. Numerous communities requested maps of New Lebanon and when Brother Isaac Youngs and Elder Rufus Bishop visited the western villages, they took with them a manuscript map of New Lebanon as the expression of an ideal.\textsuperscript{66} These maps were to present the best possible image of the Shaker community as a model for emulation but not all villages felt they could live up to this ideal:

\textsuperscript{62}Koomler, 2000, 151.
\textsuperscript{63}Emlen., 1987, 4.
\textsuperscript{64}Ibid, 4 & 16.
\textsuperscript{66}Emlen, 1987, 38 & 63.
I want you should tell Mother Lucy some of our reasons for not sending her a map of our settlement which are these—firstly, a lack of time, 2d. a lack of ability, 3d. a lack of decent buildings, fit to be seen abroad; and fourthly, because we have so many poor old buildings which we would hardly let any body take a map of for the worth of them.\(^67\)

Surviving images of New Lebanon imply order and interconnection through their emphasis on symmetry and geometric shapes, particularly expressed in their the placement of families and the illustration of their interrelations (figures 8-2 and 8-3). In the Youngs’ map, the inclusion of references to specific buildings along with geographical references (community, county, state) suggests a deliberate effort to make the community accessible to those unfamiliar with the site.\(^68\)

It is not always clear how accurate and true these maps were. In Blinn’s map, several buildings are near the gardens at the North Family (figures 8-3 and 8-4). Archaeological work in this area has failed to find traces of these structures.\(^69\) Elsewhere the map is highly precise in its depiction such as in the details of the meeting house. As Emlen suggests, the focal function of the New Lebanon meeting house may have warranted the most accurate representation (figure 8-5).\(^70\) Such differential accuracy and the combined use of landscape and cartographic representation may have


\(^{68}\) Emlen, 1987, 62.


Figure 8-2: New Lebanon. Attributed to Isaac Newton Youngs 1827-1839. Source: Emlen, 1987, 60.
Figure 8-4: Detail from Blinn’s Map showing North Family

Figure 8-5: Detail from Blinn’s map showing the details of the second meetinghouse
opened space for expression not possible in highly accurate survey maps.\textsuperscript{71}

**Shaker Publishing**

One the most successful forms of dissemination was the Shakers’ publishing program. Many of the ‘World’s People’ came to understand and even join Shaker communities through the publishing program initiated by Mother Lucy in 1806. This program resulted in the publication of five major works between 1806 and 1820, all of which would shape and educate both Believers and the ‘World’s People’ about the Shakers and their beliefs.\textsuperscript{72} Such works were valuable for recruitment. Recruitment was essential as the Shakers were a celibate Society that relied upon converts from the ‘World’s People’ to sustain and enhance their communities. Publication was invaluable for widely disseminating Shaker tenets, visions of community, and how to live a life dedicated to God. The Shakers (and their apostates) were prolific authors. Richmond, in her landmark study, identified 1,677 works written by Shakers or apostates.\textsuperscript{73} While the Shakers regularly used the World’s printers, they reserved their own printing presses for more sensitive works.\textsuperscript{74} For example, the Shakers printed the *Millennial Praises* (1813), a hymn book, and *The Testimonies of the Life, Character, Revelations, and Doctrines of Our Ever Blessed Mother Ann Lee, and the Elders with Her* (1816), for circumscribed


\textsuperscript{72}Brewer, 1986, 35.

\textsuperscript{73}While Richmond’s inventory is certainly not complete (the author has three items not identified in the inventory), it does give a good sense of the scope and range of Shaker works. Richmond, 1977.

\textsuperscript{74}New Lebanon used one firm in particular: Van Benthuysen in Albany. This firm (in its various incarnations including Packard and Van Benthuysen, C Van Benthuysen, Van Benthuysen) printed a number of notable works including the History of the Millennial Church (1823 and 1848), the Testimony of Christ’s Second Appearing (1858), and *Brief Illustration of the Principles of War and Peace* (1831).
Dissemination policy shifted over time. *A Concise Statement of the Principles of the Only True Church* was published in 1790 with limited circulation but, in 1806, Mother Lucy led the Ministry to a more widespread publishing program to articulate and illustrate Shaker beliefs. This decision was a response not only to the increasing literacy of Shaker converts, but also to the growing distance between villages.  

Distance and the possibilities offered by dissemination technologies encouraged the Shakers to develop a systematic theology. The Shaker leadership was particularly careful about how the beliefs were presented. The control of narrative was essential to their public image, sense of themselves, and place in the World. The authors of the *Testimony of Christ’s Second Appearing* avoided doctrinal statements, but presented their work as a correction of the World’s misapprehension of their community. The work drew heavily upon the ideas of Edwards, biblicism, millennialism, and common sense, as justification for the Shakers’ communalism and separatism. It also gave theological credibility to Shaker beliefs. For New Lebanon, it served to promote the Shakers to the World. Such dissemination was so important that the Shakers were prepared to provide these publications to the World free of charge:

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75 More about this document will be discussed later in this chapter.
78 Ibid, 70.
79 Ibid, 71.
80 Brewer, 1986, 35.
81 Rufus Bishop. *A Book of records, with copies of the covenant, transfers, and appointments, kept by Rufus Bishop.* Manuscript: OCIWhi I B 30. 1802-1824: 69 [September 16, 1806].
The Deacons have been to the expense of getting 1600 copies of the Kentucky Revival printed and now cannot scarcely sell one of them to the ‘World’s People’ say money is not to be had, it is all shut up; but we are not shut up from the privilege of giving them away.82

New Lebanon worked to ensure the quality of the publications. The 1808 version of the Testimony of Christ’s Second Appearing did not meet with full approbation. The Ministry reviewed the publication and found printing errors, and binding problems, took issue with matters of theology, and declared that subsequent editions would need to be reworked.83 The editorial work for the 1810 edition including the efforts of Seth Youngs Wells, the foremost theological spokesperson in the Eastern communities, who represented the New Lebanon Ministry’s interests. The leadership at New Lebanon recognized the value of the publication and wielded it as a valuable teaching and public relations tool.84 There was much to laud in the publication as, “there is an increasing evidence that the people of God are one body [and] one head, and that nothing can separate them, for they are one in faith [and] union, one and ever must remain so.”85 Nevertheless, the 1810 edition was published in Albany under the direct supervision of the Ministry which thus declared and enforced its primacy to Shakers in the western

82 Ministry (New Lebanon) “To Elder David Darrow from the Ministry (New Lebanon) April 28, 1808.” Letters - New Lebanon (1804-1809). Manuscript: OClWHi IV A 31. April 28, 1808. The Kentucky Revival was a history of the awakening in Kentucky and the arrival of Shakerism to the region. It was published by the Shakers in 1807. (Richmond, 1977, 130)


There were some works that the Shakers felt, without the proper education in Shaker beliefs, could be misinterpreted and even used maliciously. As Wells noted with the Millennial Praises, not even all songs were applicable to all Believers. Under Rufus Bishop and Seth Wells, the Shakers were even more cautious with another work. They oversaw the collection and editing of The Testimonies of the Life, Character, Revelations, and Doctrines of Our Ever Blessed Mother Ann Lee, and the Elders with Her. The document was designed as a collection of oral stories concerning the acts and lives of the early Shaker leaders. Only twenty copies were ever produced for use by all Shaker communities. This document served two roles. It helped the Elders to remind and educate the younger Believers about the trials of early Shakerism while recasting the early history of Shakerism in terms of second generation Shaker issues and ways of thinking. It also armed Shakers against attack by giving Elders first hand accounts of the movement, Mother Ann, and the other early leaders so that they could dispute any apostate or unfriendly account which portrayed the Shakers negatively.

Most Shaker works were designed for public consumption. One of the most widespread and influential Shaker works produced by the Shakers was Green and Wells’ A Summary View of the Millennial Church, or United Society of Believers. Its original purpose was to “present to the public a small cheap volume, comprising particular
information concerning the United Society, adapted to the general class of readers, and calculated to answer the usual enquires respecting their religious principles and moral economy.” It was an official statement of Shaker belief authorized by Mother Lucy before her death:

Our only object is to satisfy candid enquirers, and to give information concerning our faith, principles, and practice, in plain and intelligible language, to all who are willing to receive it. And for those who care for none of these things, and have no disposition to hear our testimony, we are quite willing they should enjoy their own opinions, and leave ours alone; we do not wish to disturb them. We live in a country which boasts highly of the freedom of its religious institutions; and religion is, or ought to be and object of free choice for every one.

We are not ignorant that much has been written and published, from time to time, from a spirit of enmity and detraction, by those who would gladly renew against us, those scores of religious intolerance which formerly deluged the earth in blood, were it in power. However doubtful this may appear to those who know not the enmity of such characters, experience has taught us that the spirit of persecution is the same now as it was then, and would display itself in the same manner, were it under no restraint.

This was a direct response to written attacks and uninformed publications about their communities. Taking together the Testimony of Christ’s Second Appearing (1808 - 1500 copies, 1810 - 2500 copies, 1823 - 3000 copies), The Kentucky Revival (1807 and 1808 - 1600 copies), and Dunlavy’s Manifesto (1818), by 1824, the Shakers had published and distributed more than 10,000 copies of works about Shaker beliefs and their communities. Such was the influence of the 1823 A Summary View of the Millennial

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91 Calvin Green and Seth Wells. A Summary View of the Millennial Church or United Society of Believers, (commonly called Shakers). Albany: C.Van Benthuysen, 1848: II.


Church, or United Society of Believers that many members of the World’s People would quote it verbatim to illustrate the nature of Shaker communities and life. The 1827 Testimonies Concerning the Character and Ministry of Mother Ann Lee was a defense of Ann Lee against apostates and detractors.\footnote{Richmond, 1977, 205; Christine De Vinne. “The Culture of Shaker Placenames: Sacred Geography and Communal Biography.” \textit{Names}, Vol. 51. No. 3-4. (2003): 222.} Unlike the 1816 publication, the Ministry made this one available for public consumption.

The Shakers also expressed their beliefs through more pragmatic and commercial publications such as the \textit{Gardener’s Manual}, designed as a supplement to their successful seed program. They published the first manual in 1836 and sold 16,000 copies; a more comprehensive document followed in 1843.\footnote{Amy Bess Miller. (Ed.) \textit{The Gardiner’s Manual}. [Facsimile Edition]. New Lebanon: United Society, 1843. [Pittsfield: Hancock Shaker Village, 1991]: no pagination.} The \textit{Gardener’s Manual} was designed to provide practical advice about gardens while defending the Shakers from allegations that they had sold poor quality goods.\footnote{Bess Miller, 1991, ii.} It also reinforced that Shaker places were places of order, quality, and God.

Ultimately, the Shakers recognized that both their theology and their writings had to reflect their evolution and growth as a community. On May 4, 1842, Philemon Stewart, chief instrument of God at New Lebanon, received a vision to climb the Holy Mount to receive the words of the Lord.\footnote{Robert Meader. “The Vision of Brother Philemon.” \textit{The Shaker Quarterly}, Vol. X., No. I (Spring 1970): 8-17. Meader notes that there were similarities between Stewart’s experience and those of Joseph Smith at Palmyra. One could push this further and note the similarities between Stewart’s receipt of the Lord’s word and those of Moses.} He climbed the Mount repeatedly for the next fourteen days and produced a manuscript of 225 pages entitled the \textit{Sacred and Holy...
Roll. This document was later published with a certificate of divine approbation from the Ministry. New Lebanon also circulated this document to the communities, requiring that it be read in its entirety before it could be sent on to the next village. The volume was to be distributed to the rulers of the World, who were exhorted not to dismiss it lest they fall on difficult times. Religious leaders were directed to place the publication side by side with the Bible on their pulpits and to use it for the edification of their congregations. The document was not universally accepted by the Shakers due to its emphasis on spiritualist ideas and regulations, and its complex use of language. With the growing rejection of the radical elements of the spiritualist movement in New Lebanon under Stewart, the book and Stewart fell from favour. As it became increasingly clear that Believers were challenging the work, the New Lebanon Ministry withdrew it from circulation. The sense of place, including how the community should fulfil its covenantal obligations implicit within the book, was not seen as an appropriate representation of the Shaker communities. However, during its heyday, it spurred the production of several other similar documents, most notably Paulina Bates’ The Divine Book of Holy and Eternal Wisdom. “Other such writings came forth like a spring flood, but the Elders and editors staunched most of the spate, which seemed to get more and

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98 Ibid, 8.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid, 9.
101 Stein, 1992, 182.
103 In reviewing the 1848 edition of the History of the Millennial Church, specific mention in made of the Sacred and Holy Roll as an available publication. However, by the 1856 edition of the Testimony of Christ’s Second Appearing, the spiritual gifts of Mother Ann’s work were being tied into the growing spiritualist movement within the United States. (Green and Wells, 1848, II; Youngs et al, 1856, v-vi.)
more esoteric.”

Following the decline of the spiritualist movement, and with the loss of membership in the late antebellum period, there was a desire to create new texts, as noted by Frederick Evans in 1858:

The Edition of the Texts in this Society is about exhausted; and we find that the World of the present day want something that is written in view of the condition of things now in existence among them; just, as Dunlavy and the [Millennium Church 1823] [etc], were written under the influence and in reference to the then living moving World . . . our existence as a people is contingent upon our relation to the World of mind that now is, and not upon the past, or future.

Ultimately, these printed materials presented a unified voice that could draw Shaker communities together.

The Shakers were prolific publishers, and many Shaker publications were designed for use by the membership, as recruiting tools and as counterweights to the critical writings of apostates and enemies. Shaker printed works were created to educate and provide a sense of Shaker life, especially through the description of Shaker places and Shaker place in the World. Shaker accounts tended to emphasize the Shakers’ union and order and ultimately, these works provided a sense of place, illustrating the spiritual foundation for their communal life.

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104 Meader, 1970, 11.
107 Stein, 1992, 87.
**Conclusion: Disseminating the Shaker Message**

The diverse texts, ranging from written correspondence, cartography, circular epistles, rules and regulations, and a prolific publishing program makes clear that New Lebanon played a strong leadership role. While some scholars have seen New Lebanon’s role as limited, the manuscript record reveals an important relationship between New Lebanon and the other communities. New Lebanon led the other communities in their decision making and it was to New Lebanon that these communities turned for spiritual guidance, emotional support, and advice on governance and how to fulfill their covenantal obligations. The New Lebanon Ministry did not hesitate to dictate how Shaker places should appear and be interpreted. The principles articulated at New Lebanon created an imagined community but New Lebanon was not insensitive to local issues. Local circumstances often necessitated the modification of directives and at times the Ministry was not fully aware of the activities in other communities. Both South Union and Whitewater villages built brick meeting houses for pragmatic reasons, despite New Lebanon’s suggestion that they avoid the use of brick.  

The Ministry at New Lebanon often struggled to assert its authority over the distances. The circular epistle of 1829 reveals both the Ministry assertion of its role and the challenges associated with the task over such great distances. Ultimately, the New Lebanon Ministry had to recognize Union Village in Ohio as the senior institution in the west, and the village to which the western villages would defer. Such a

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108 Koomler, 2000, 40.  
109 Stein, 1992, 121  
110 Circular Letter of 1829 concerning revision of the covenant. DLC Shaker Collection Item # 91. n.d.
pragmatic approach is not surprising considering the Shaker experience. The Shakers were realists, and as their communities developed during the antebellum period, there was a growing sense of maturity not only in each community, but in the relationship with the World, between communities, and in their beliefs. The Shakers were a people in a constant and paradoxical struggle: how does one live in the World and not be of it? The antebellum Shakers also succeeded in bringing together diverse viewpoints and ideas, and created a coherent community nonviolently. New Lebanon’s leadership was not overbearing; the thousands of letters and documents sent from New Lebanon convey parental deference and concern for the well being of all Believers. However, all of these efforts were to a single goal: to live a life as God’s Chosen People in his Promised Land, located in the World, while simultaneously ‘not being of it.’
CHAPTER NINE

EPILOGUE

It has been shown before, that the order of the United Society is an emblem of that of the invisible world; and those who come into this order and faithfully persevere to the end, will be ranked among the first fruits pertaining to the general harvest of mankind. They are said to be kings and priests unto God, and reign upon the earth!¹

Concluding Thoughts

Any textual reading requires information about a text’s creation, historical context, specialized vocabulary, and the author’s intent and is inevitably interpreted through the reader’s personal lens.² In other words, the meaning of a text is dynamic, relying upon the social context not only of the author, but also of the reader.³ Ultimately:

through ignorance, through faith, through intelligence, through trickery and cunning, through illumination, the reader rewrites the text with the same words of the original but under another heading, re-creating it, as it were, in the very act of bringing into being.⁴

Among the works transformed by readers were those texts which sought to elucidate God’s Word. For example, the creation of the King James Bible was intended not only to represent a particular narrative concerning how God intended his work to be written, but also how it was to be read and understood.⁵ This can be extended to built form and  

¹Fayette Mace. Familiar Dialogues of Shakerism; in which the Principles of the United Society are Illustrated and Defended. Portland: Charles Day and Co., 1838. 97
⁴Manguel, 1996, 211.
landscape: when seeking to understand the development of an edifice or landscape
dedicated to God, the creation must be placed within its secular and material context but
also the theology that informed a community’s religious ideas.\textsuperscript{6}

Traditionally Geographers have been loath to contemplate religiosity and
spirituality. Yet religion of one form or another is often central to identity, place, and
narrative. Narrative, place, and identity are an interconnected and essential element of the
human condition. As demonstrated by Keith Basso’s work, commonly held narratives
about place serve to reinforce identity and identification with particular social values.\textsuperscript{7}
Religious beliefs and values shape understandings of place, which makes religion a
fertile subject for analysis. As Bakken notes in her analysis of the Union Village (Ohio),
phenomena like the Shaker village must be studied within the context of their making:

A study of the ways in which place influences the development of a
religious community also helps balance a frequent weakness of Shaker
studies, which is to treat communities as nearly isolated entities unto
themselves without a full consideration of the physical contexts in which
they arose and always existed.\textsuperscript{8}

Bakken argues that how the Shakers are studied must include the differing experiences of
their environment.\textsuperscript{9} This dissertation has sought to do this for a single village, and has
demonstrated that rather than a singular Shaker experience or sense of place there were

\begin{itemize}
\item Bennett, 1997, 257.
\item Keith Basso. \textit{Wisdom Sits in Places. Landscape and Language Amongst the Western Apache}
University of New Mexico Press, 1996; Brian Osborne. “Landscape, Memory, Monuments, and
\item Dawn E Bakken. \textit{Putting the Shakers “in place”: Union Village, Ohio, 1805-1815}. Ph.D>
Thesis, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1998: 9
\item Ibid, 393.
\end{itemize}
Religious belief is expressed through narratives and rituals. It also buttresses identity and belonging which find expression in place. As Wentz writes, “religion is the systematic set of expressions which reflects the ultimate order, meaning, and possible transformation of existence for a people.” This is further supported by Stromberg, who argues that commitment systems such as religion attract believers because they impose a sense of meaning and order. Key to religious expression is myth, which, “[helps] people find their place in the world and their true orientation.” Many people who join religious and secular communal societies are intellectually and emotionally attracted to the messages espoused.

The Shakers had texts which informed their actions, and the ways they understood and shaped their places. They also existed within a series of nested places: the pre-Revolutionary British colonial empire and the landscape of the First Great Awakening; the antebellum United States and the landscape of the Second Great Awakening; along with Columbia and Berkshire Countries, all of which served to shape them. Additionally, as Promey writes, “not only American history, but also biblical history served in the

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11 Ibid, 11.
12 Ibid, 6.
creation of the Shaker narrative.” Ultimately, the Shakers were complex and unquestionably human in their actions.

New Lebanon, as the ‘first among equals’ within the Shaker world played a central role in shaping how the Shaker understanding of their covenant with God was expressed and understood. As a result, the discourses that emerged concerning how best to engage the Shaker convent with God at New Lebanon reverberated through all Shaker communities. According to Br. Arnold Hadd the role and nature of the Covenant within Shaker life is often misunderstood.17 The covenant was more than a single legal document. This narrative of the spiritual covenant with God was integral to the Shakers as a community and informed much of the Shaker experience and sense of place. It was profoundly geographical as it was a narrative about a ‘Chosen People’ in a ‘Promised Land.’ The challenge of Shaker life was how to best express this relationship with God in the physical realm: how should Shakerism be understood and portrayed, and how should the Shakers interact with the ‘World’s People.’

What has emerged from this dissertation is a more complex image of the Shakers than can be gleaned from previous portrayals. The Shaker understanding of how to ensure fidelity to their covenant and appropriate interaction with the World’s People was dynamic. So too was their sense of place and the places they constructed. The Shakers struggled to be in the World yet not be of the world. As Hayden notes, the road to perfection could not be immediate; in a landscape it was reflected by continual

16Promey, 1993, 125.
improvement and evolution.\textsuperscript{18} Shaker design was determined as much by custom, purpose and function as by theology.\textsuperscript{19} However, the Shakers’ self imposed ‘separation’ from the World grew increasingly artificial for many of its members towards the end of the antebellum period.\textsuperscript{20} While utopian communities may attempt, and even succeed, in mitigating the tensions between religiosity and modernity, they still exist within the world.\textsuperscript{21}

Still, one must approach Shaker documents with caution, as they often reflect an official position.\textsuperscript{22} As Savulis notes, the Shakers produced a range of written texts, including official documents, such as daily journals, legal and financial accounts, correspondence, and private records such as diaries, and public works, which express differing voices and concerns.\textsuperscript{23} Many documents which might have provided greater insight into the Shakers’ experience, such as spirit drawings and diaries, were destroyed by the Shakers themselves. Which remains is only a part of the Shaker story and any work that examines them must recognize this reality.

Understanding New Lebanon through previous research should also be approached with care. The site has been the focus of early heritage preservation efforts that, in additional to celebrationing and remembering the Shakers, idealized and

\textsuperscript{18}Hayden, 1976, 41.
\textsuperscript{19}Stein, 1992,141.
\textsuperscript{20}Anderson, 1969, 32
\textsuperscript{22}Stein, 1992,148.
fictionalized the nature of the community. In Gutek and Gutek’s work on utopian communities, they describe New Lebanon as follows.

It is at Mount Lebanon that visitors can truly experience a sense of a Shaker village. In a pastoral setting strung along a winding road are clusters of buildings from the Church, North, and Center families. Walking up the old Albany-Boston Post Road, with a little imagination visitors may feel they are indeed in a place separated from the World.24

Such statements emphasizing the pastoral aspects of Shaker places are simplistic; it is too easy to consider these places symbolic of simpler places and times.

**Future Research**

This dissertation represents part of a greater project to elucidate the Shakers, their influence, and their history. It captures and represents only one part of the New Lebanon story. This dissertation was limited in its scope to material specifically associated with New Lebanon Shaker Village in the antebellum period. Only scant attention was paid to the responses from the various communities and how the particular expressions of the covenantal narrative discussed and debated at New Lebanon were themselves discussed, debated, rejected, and/or modified elsewhere. Expanding the study beyond New Lebanon would itself be a significant project. Subsequent research can also build upon this work by examining the decline of New Lebanon Shaker Village between 1860 to 1947 and the history of the Family sites following their sale from Shaker ownership. Of particular interest would the adaptation of the surviving community sites for subsequent uses, such as the Berkshire Reformatory School, the Darrow School (a private preparatory school),

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the Abode of the Message (a Sufi Monastery), and the Shaker Village Work Group Camp (figure 9-1). That New Lebanon has retained its sense of place is in no small part due to the subsequent owners. The issue of heritage preservation and Shaker history is also ground for fertile academic work; heritage preservation is not without its own narratives and these no doubt influence how Shakerism has come to be understood. More broadly,

![Figure 9-1: Shaker Village Ski Group. c. 1975 This group was associated with the Shaker Village Work Group which made use of the property following the departure of the Shakers. Source: Author’s Collection.](image)

this work provides an intellectual framework that can be adapted for the study of not only other communal societies, but larger religious bodies. How bodies and organizations that profess ‘Truth’ and the ‘One-true-path’ reconcile competing narratives is an important question and one which merits further study and thought.

Ultimately, as in the case of New Lebanon, the places of the Shakers defy simple
definition. Like Shakerism, Shaker places were dynamic. The 1780s Shakers were not the same as the 1860s Shakers, who were more widely respected, financially secure, and politically astute. The manuscript record reveals a more socially complex and highly industrialized community. It is no accident that in Losing’s 1857 description of the Shakers, his initial view of New Lebanon is obscured by a “vail [sic] of blue smoke.” 25

The antebellum Shakers were among the most technologically adept people of their age, and incorporated any useful knowledge from a ‘fallen world’ if it allowed them to better fulfil their spiritual duties. While the Shakers are generally framed as existing in the past, they continue to practice their dynamic faith at Sabbathday Lake; the community even maintains a website to educate people about its belief. The narratives of the Shakers and their places as drawn from the Andrews’ works preclude such an understanding of the Shakers. The construction of the Shakers as isolated and their art as an isolated aesthetic made it impossible to view them as active participants in the world that surrounded, and continues to surround, them. The antebellum Shakers actively engaged with and learned from the World’s People. This engagement allowed the Shakers to produce a vibrant and important society. In the tendency of some scholars and others (such as the Andrews) to place their primary focus on the material products of the community, the spiritual basis, which was paramount in Shakerism, was neglected. Ultimately, it was the spiritual covenant, and the competing discourses concerning how the spiritual should manifest itself materially, that which shaped the Shakers and their places.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archive Symbols

Canadian
NAC National Archives of Canada

American
DLC Library of Congress, Washington, District of Columbia
DeWint Henry Francis DuPont Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, De.
MPH Hancock Shaker Village, Pittsfield, Mass.
MwiW Williams College, Williamsville, Mass.
MeSL Shaker Village, Sabbathday Lake, Maine
N New York State Library and Archives, Albany, New York
NN New York Public Library, New York, New York
NOC Shaker Museum and Library, Old Chatham, New York
OClWhi Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio
PPMA Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA

Primary Material

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Appendix A

Excerpts from Historical Scetches [sic] or a Record of Remarkable events With Remarks [and] Illustrations Kept By Giles B. Avery New Lebanon

“Sketches of a meeting on the evening of [January] 25th 1843 at the first Order, both orders assembled together, in the great House.

We entered the meeting room at ½ past 7 oclock [sic] in the evening, on entering, the first thing seen was one brother (Philemon Stewart) placed between the two doors leading into the room, before a small bench, upon which stood a tin cylindrical box, covered with cloth and leather, resembling a small drum, at one end.——

The instrument (Philemon S.) Was dressed in a grey coat, druggot trowsers, [sic] blue jacket, a red flannel pinner with a wide leathern belt tanned with the hair on, which was black, holding in his hand a sin all stick with a stuffed ball upon one end, some resembling a drum stick, with which he beat upon the sounding box, or drum, almost constantly thro the meeting.—”1

“They suspended a red cloth in place of the white on both the East and West side of the room and the white ones were removed. – to these red ones they attached black, – they made with 2 red belts a cross upon the floor and in each of the four corners thereof they set the red plates, one in each corner, upon the north and south sides they placed the burning lamps.”2

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2 Avery, 1843, 204.
Appendix B
Mother Lucy’s Golden Rule

Mother Lucy’s Golden Rule
Says Mother Lucy¹

1 Be industrious, be neat, be prudent and saving in all tings. Spare no pains to do good to the Aged, and use no partiality to any one of any age. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath and upon this day get no extra bits or meals for any one, without leave of your Elders, and have no unnecessary [sic] cooking or providing for other days save in some extra case, and then by permission of the Eldresses or Deaconesses.

2 Have no cooking of flesh or fish from Saturday noon, till Monday morning. In case of extra meals fish may be prepared at any time save on the Sabbath.

3 Let there be no pounding of meat, or any wise of the kind, before the usual time or rising in the morning.

4 Spare no pains for those that go out from home, especially in cold weather. Always be beat and decent in putting up their victuals, and waste none that comes back to you, but O dont [sic] give them too many sorts at once.

5 Never throw in your slops any food that has in it any portion of wheat, sugar or molasses if it can possible be avoided. Never put the least crumb in the fire that can be eaten by any living creature.

6 Be prudent and saving of your soap. If by any means you waste or destroy any thing to the amount of an ounce or pint, you ought to confess it to those that have the charge of the kitchen or to the Elders.

7 No one is to rise before the appointed time on account of their work except to get early breakfast and all should strive to get their work done by 7 o'clock in the evening, and be in their rooms if possibly consistant [sic] with their necessary duties.

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8 In the afternoon the Sisters should go together in some room to save wood. Those that
depend on attending to the brethren that are absent, should never leave the house over
half an hour; without asking some one to assist if called upon by the brethren.

9 Always prepare your victuals neat and decent, and place it upon the table in like
manner, and those that depend upon tending the tables, should at all times make it their
first duty to go and look upon the tables, as soon as the people rise form their knees, and
never all leave the table, till you are sure thy are done eating.

10 Every Cook ought to feel a burden and care that the tables are

well tended. Be very careful how you intrude upon the prayers of the Saints by loud
talking or laughing, or by any unnecessary noise.

11 No idle talk, nor unnecessary work is to be going on between settings so as to hinder
the cooks from performing their first duty which is to get ready the second setting.

12 No noisy business is to be done in the dining room, while the people are eating, at any
time of day; and when a company are eating late meals there should be no idle words in
their hearing from the cooks, and no talking to them. When they kneel, all in the room are
to kneel, or leave the room.

13 Let the one that is appointed to get the extra meals for the brethren attend strictly to it
and let the other cooks by no means be inviting the brethren old or young to eat a bite
hear or there, but what they have let them have in

order; but always be kind and obliging to them at all times.

14 Never get your extra meals more extravagant than you can afford for the general meal
at the table.

15 Cook no meat, and make no hot drink for those who not use it at the table because
they are out of season, unless they ask for it, or have been in some very tedious job or
journey.

16 No one need feel obliged to wait for the brethren to eat, but get their meals ready and
call them, and then leave the kitchen if the rest are absent and make no unnecessary
errands to tarry and so detain them when they are done. By no means use any partiality in
your dealings with the brethren, but do justice by all.

17 No Cook is to be in the kitchen alone over 20 minutes at any time of day, but if your
branch requires you to be there longer, have help or company,
But take not the opportunity to do your work when brethren are about, unless all have to be there in some extra job.

18 Let each cook prepare and manage their business so as to kneel with the rest at the breakfast table; and sit down at the table with them at their meal; and not think a few minutes earlier or later would be better. I say the right time will never come, so as you must come to the right time.

19 When you sit at your meals by yourselves, you have no more liberty for laughing and talking than at any other meal, and if it is done it had ought to be confessed as a disorder; but if you are called away from your meals to attend to the brethren, or do some necessary errand or chore, then do you duty and return if they are not done eating; but never let trifles hinder you from keeping this my golden rule

20 No one cook should go into the orchards or gardens alone to get fruit [and] sauce. Have no business on hand when you are in the kitchen, that will in the least hinder you from your duties there; and no writing, reading, braiding or sewing, is to be done in the kitchen; but knitting is suitable work for what time you have in the forenoon, or afternoon, after four oclock: for all should be regularly there at that time, unless on Saturday and Monday, their work does not require it, except some necessary duty keeps them away; if so they should inform some one of the cooks of it.

21 Never deal out any of your allowances to individuals, without leave of those that provide for you which is the deaconesses.

22 Be prudent and saving of your bread meal of every kind, and ever remember that all that is provided for the kitchen is reckoned to the Kitchen and the cost will be summed up for or against you according to your wise or unwise dealings. Remember these days that your ever blessed Mother Ann ate her meals of the crumbs that fell from the tables of those that had not where with to prepare a table equal to your meanest fare.

23 Be very prudent of all your working utensils; never put you earthen ware into very warm water, nor your pewter [and] tin on hot iron, and if any one breaks or melts a plate, they are to confess it to the Deaconess

24 Never put soap on your floors, but if they really need washing in suds, mail it in a pail, and dissolve well your soap.

25 The young Sisters, or those under twenty five ought to see that the floors, sinks [and]
dish cupboard and shelves are kept neat and decent, day by day

and those older ought to feel it their indispensiblen [sic] duty to see that the cooking, together with the whole duties of the day, are performed according to their Mother’s Golden Rule.

26 Let each one see well to the branch they are entrusted with, [and] then assist where help is needed most, or in the branch that seems for the time being to be the hardest.

27 Now before I close I will just make mention of four points that I wish you to bear in mind daily.

28 First to assist in preparing the tables the table for the first setting when the alarm is given by the bell.

29 Second, to prepare for the second setting as neatly as soon as possible.

30 Third to see that both tables are well tended at morning, noon and evening.

31 Fourth, to do up your work as soon as possible after supper and do it well.

This my word is to each faithful child or mine, and my unceasing love shall flow to ever one that will obey a Kind Parents Word.

Beloved Brethren [and] Sisters.

The simplicity of the gospel will grow and flourish in every soul that is strictly obedient to practice the Golden Rule Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you. If we make this our daily labor, when we desire a kindness we shall ask in the language of our Mother and say will you be so kind as to do me such, as or such a favor, and those that have done what was desired, will return a welcome when thanked for the kindness bestowed.

Let us train ourselves to regard the feelings of others, and study how to accommodate them, instead of cultivating a selfish accommodation. When we are setting our dwelling rooms, we should have self government enough to make ourselves agreeable to the company. Do not sit in an awkward position, shoving the feet about, or leaning on the bed, or against the wall, or putting our feet on the rounds of the chair.

When we walk, let us avoid scuffing and step light. When wood is need bring our share, and do not forget to bring water; as all in their turn want to drink and wash.
After using the wash bowl or basin, make it clean for our companions to use. When we make a fire do not put the tongs in the ashes too fat, and scatter the ashes all over the stove hearth or shake dirt from the wood around the floor, but be careful and think of the work it makes others to be indifferent about the use of things in our dwelling rooms.

Do not intrude on others by having dirty clothes in our clothes rooms, or leaving our shoes that have been worn to milking out of place.

Let us speak and act kind to all in the room, have our love universal, not partial, having one or two favored ones to associate with, and be cold and scornful to the rest. “This is a Party Spirit, off from christian [sic] ground,” and leads to contention.

**Our Conversation**

“As evil communication corrupts good manners,” also out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,” does it not become us to have our words and expressions modest and chaste? do not play and make sport out of the vulgar to amuse ourselves or those we are with it serves to defile the sense;

Would it not be well for everyone to think twice before speaking so that we may not offend in word?

Do not be carnally minded, turning almost everything that is said, as food for the baser propensities, not catch at a story or word that happens to be thoughtfully told or spoken; to tell it over and spin out a long conversation and perhaps contention, by telling it to some one that was not present.

But if in our daily walk or evening circles, any thing is spoken or acted that centers to carnality, or impurity, to deceit, or slander, let us carry it to the Altar; and if the one guilty of the wrong does not feel reproved, it is because there is too much of the same influence bearing rule and too little of the gospel testimony.

When this is the case, the person that has been conscientious enough to open the wrong is considered disagreeable, and called a tattler; especially if the Elders feel to admonish the wrong: this is a wicked spirit, and should be banished from the hearts of Mother’s children forever.

It would be much better to watch our conversation, and sometimes give our sense to religions feelings, and the expression of religious sentiments or something to improve our
minds and increase our spiritual understanding.

Do not talk too much on the subject of dress, it creates pride and

fills the mind with vanity; nor about beauty, till we properly understand what is beautiful.

We hire Men to work for us that are of the world, and our counsel is to keep a separation. Does not this imply that they are beneath our society? then is it not an evil and a great shame! to allow them a place in our conversation, our thoughts and actions? which will certainly be affected by the objects we cherish.

Our Union Meetings

Do all support them and make them agreeable? do all feel that they have a duty to do in this meeting as well as all others to cherish the gift of this appointment. Our union is our strength; it comes by carefully gathering from every gift. Then let us prize these times of social gatherings

and strive to have them seasons of comfort and enjoyment. If any one is weary or fatigued by hard labor thro’ the day, and becomes drowsy; let others of the company contribute something cheering and pleasant, that will serve to enliven the feelings of their weary Brother or Sister and edify the company they are sitting with.

It is improper to laugh and whisper with the one by our side about something unknown to the rest, or to sit with the arms folded or hold up the chin, with one hand resting the elbow on the arm half folded.

Avoid sitting with the feet on the round of the chair, or projecting out and crossing each other. It is considered very beneficial to devote a portion of union time to singing.

Little Annoyances in Singing Meeting

Hanging back when asked to pitch a song, laughing, whispering, hunching, watching the motions and gestures of others, beating too loudly with the feet, and neglecting to beat with the hands, tilting back the chair we sit in, and putting our feet on the rounds of the one before us or leaning on each other are things which every cultivated person will avoid.

[Note - chair tilters were created in 1852]
On Meeting of Worship

It is our privilege to enjoy a season of refreshment whenever we meet for divine worship; this ought to be esteemed above all other gatherings the most sacred.

We should not be satisfied until we can worship in union, with our hands and feet, our hearts and voices. Let us learn to labour in the square order, let us shuffle right, and motion with our hands in the proper way, and march in a circular form as near as possible.

Let none be entirely mute, never manifesting by words their faith [and] zeal, such do but little to support the meeting, and are apt to express dissatisfaction and complain of dearth.

All should avoid confusing the meeting, by neglecting to talk hold and unite with the general gift. It looks improper to see those that are quite young leave their places to open windows or doors for the sake of more ventilation, regardless of the feelings of others.

It is very disagreeable to have any one keep moving their feet, and creaking their shoes in the time of speaking. If the senses are wholly absorbed in worship we shall be able to control ourselves, as not to obstruct the gift, or disturb our Brethren [and] Sisters.

On Going to Meals

Let us not go in a scattered way, one at a time, talking and laughing. When we kneel do not rest the hands on the table, chair, or bench but fold them. Do not gaze around when kneeling, but remember our duty to the giver of every blessing, which is God, and solemnly attend to the sacred order of kneeling to him.

When we are done eating do not sit and pick our teeth, or make a smacking noise with the tongue and lips to extract particles of food from them, but wait till we leave the dining room.

There are many more little things that might be mentioned, that are really annoyances in society, and mar our social happenings and comfort very much.
Appendix C

Particular Counsel
to the Sisters for
their Safe Going
and Protection

[Eldress Eliza Abb Taylor]1

1.

November 11th 1855

We have been counseled to leave the brethren’s rooms when the bell rings for union meeting to be out, and not stay after that time to have any unnecessary conversation, not stop in the halls to talk with the brethren.

We are counseled to take the opportunity to do the brethren’s chores when they are not present, whether it is in the morning or at night;

2.

and never by any means invite them to help us make their beds.

We should never be fond of talking to the brethren about sisters dispositions, or telling them what is said in our meetings or any difficulties that exist between sisters.

No sisters should write errands to the brethren of any description without the knowledge of their Elders, but take the opportunity to do it by word of

3.

mouth, is possibly consistant[,] for it is and ever has been the order for brethren and sisters not to write to each other.

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When the weather is suitable for sisters to go to the grave, if any are unable to go, or wish to stay away, they should get liberty of the Elders.

We are counseled not to borrow, or lend our clothes to each other, and to dress according to our business

4.

and never tear up any garment without getting counsel of some one besides ourselves: and never swap away any of our clothes without liberty

No knitting or sewing is to be done in union meeting, and no braiding of bobbin [etc]. And each one is to attend in their appointed place and not be going into other rooms without liberty.

We must remember the

5.

order concerning working with the brethren over half an hour without liberty.

It is contrary to counsel to fix up our drawers chests or cupboards on the Sabbath.

We have been counseled not to draw up nor put on our caps on the sabbath. [sic]

It has been and still is the counsel for the young sisters to have an appointed time

6.

to open their minds and it would be pretty for them to attend to that duty without being called upon. And all should feel the importance of letting their situation be known at times to their Elders.

It would look very beautiful in times of singing for worship, when standing, for all to wave their bodies, as we have often been taught.
7. It is considered as a very improper and immodest thing for sisters to hang their under garments in any room[,] hall, cellar or corner in the kitchen, (dark room not excepted) neither is it proper to hang them on the railing[,] up garret nor in any halls in the house; but our rooms and closets are the proper places for such garments. And it is desired that this thing be remember by all.

8. Neither should we leave any of our clothes hanging or lieing [sic] in the lower hall or meeting room: nor leave them out of doors over night.

As it has been brought about by pleading the necessity thereof of having the sisters dirty under garments carried to the wash house before mondy [sic] morning, it is desired that all who carry any there, would put them securely in the bathing trouth [sic] and lock the door.

9. and put the key in its place. This thing must be carefully attended to or we shall certainly be disgraced.

Mother Lucy desired in her day, that no sister nor sisters, should say any thing to the brethren about riding out, but if they wanted to go, ask their Elder Sisters and let that suffice.

When the order was established for our sabbath [sic] day dinner, it was concluded,

10. for all who eat in the kitchen to go to the table with the family, except those who are getting the dinner.

Mother Lucy established the order in her day, that sisters should not weave over six runs in a day without liberty, and this order has never been taken off.

The sisters are not allowed to have open lights in their shops, neither mornings nor evenings.
11.

The sisters are not allowed to go to any of the apartments of the second Order without liberty, no more than to any other family.

Eldress Asenath has told us that Mother Lucy forbid the sisters making foreign tea or coffee at their shops, and it is desired that no one would take their grounds to the shop to steep over with other herbs. But we are to drink our foreign tea for our breakfast and drink it in the kitchen unless under the Physicians care.

12.

It has always been the counsel for the sisters to speak to the Elders about it when ever they have occasion to go to the physicians shop to stay and be doctored and it is necessary that this counsel should be attended to now, as ever it was. We are also counseled to let the Elders know if we hurt ourselves bad enough to call on the physicians for help. Also when we have a tooth drawn or filled.

It has always been the regulation for the head singer in the class to speak to the Elders about it, when they have a class singing meeting.

If sisters have any songs, or gifts or inspiration for either brethren or sisters they should let it be known to the Elders before they say any thing to any one else about it.

13.

It is thought to be very improper for sisters to set in each others lap, or to be fawning over each other in any way.

The sisters have been counseled not to ask any body to will them their things when they die, neither should they give any one any thing unless it has been given to us as a present.
15.

But our clothes after we are dead, are to be carried to the deaconesses to be disposed of.

We should be very careful how we lay temptations before each other by getting them to rub, bathe or wash us unnecessarily.

Sisters should not go to washing till the bell rings.

Sisters may not go to ironing till they can see without a candle.

16.

Sisters must not take a girl in the childrens [sic] order to go with them for company to the brethrens [sic] shop.

Sisters must not put brethrens [sic] clothes in cloths [sic] marked for themselves.

Blue and white thread is though most proper to mark with.

No one is allowed to own a clock as a private property to take with them from

17.

room to room or shop to shop.

If any one has a present which they want to change for something else they must apply to the family Deaconesses, and not to the office Deaconesses.
Appendix D
E. Rufus Bishop. “Some Notes and Statements, mostly concerning Buildings in former times.” ¹

Note A– p. 2
The public horseshed, South, and S. West of the former Meeting house, 200 feet in length, and in the form of an ell L was erected, I should say, in the year 1786. – it stood so that the S.E. corner came within a few feet, say 20 or 30. – of the N.W. corner of the Great house as it was first built. – but I am not certain as to the time.

Note B- p. 3
The Blacksmiths’ shop, [and] ‘Hatter’s shop, were put up in the year 1788; and previous to the erection of the first dwelling house. This blacksmith’s shop stood about 100 feet south from the brick shop, [and] west of the school house. – and the aforesaid hatter’s shop stood where the school house now stands.

Note C- p. 3
It is said that our first tan house was also erected in the latter part of the year 1788: but I am not certain about that matter; but I feel pretty sure that if it was not built that year, it must have been very early the following season; It stood East [and] West– and a few feet N.W. of the present one.

Note D – p. 3
In 1789 The [Church] built their first Gristmill, and on Jonathan Walker’s land, on the stream, near 160 rods air line South West from the great dwelling house. Moses Johnson was the Mill Wright. – This mill did great service for many year– but was finally torn down ( I believe. I. Y.) About the year 1833: a new stone mill now standing, having been built in 1824 [etc]
“It is said the old North spinshop, on the East side of the road, north of the Office, which is now used for a poorhouse, [and] to lodge hired men, was built in the year 1789, – in the fall. [no ” seen]
The Spinshop– so called now, opposite to the house built for the youth, and now called the second house, was built in 1789. – Also the little brick shop, south of the great dwelling house, [and] close to the second house, was built in the fall of 1789, October – and torn down in 1844.

1790 July
A barn, formerly called the great barn, was moved from the east side of the road to the

opposite side, and is now improved by the 2nd order. This year also the first family built a commodious Hog sty, situated just back of where the horse shed then stood, a few rods West of the Great house. It was 40 feet square, with an upper loft to store corn. But it was so near our dwelling houses, that it became a nuisance [sic], and was afterwards moved west of the barns, and rebuilt in a different form; Moses Johnson was the Carpenter.

1791
March 28th:
William Safford began to frame the East house to stand East of the Great house; it was raised the 21st of April following.

June 2nd
Amos Jewett and Abel Shattuck went to Harvard, to underpin their Meeting house, which was raised on the 8th of the same month.

March
Park Avery [and] Daniel Hilt, joiners, went to work on the meeting house at Watervliet. Moses Johnson Moses Miscer, Stephen Markham [and] John Bruce, went there the 9th of March to frame the meeting house. Elisha Barto [and] Levi Chauncey went there to work on the 21st of April.

June 2nd
The house, formerly called “the aged peoples” was raised. It was repaired, or rebuilt in the year 1815. It has now for many years been called the 2nd Order. The dwelling house opposite the Meeting house at Hancock, was raised this same 2nd day of June.

June 7th:
Moses Johnson and Nathan Farrington went to Enfield Conn – to help them frame their meeting house, which they calculated to raise on the 21st of the same month.

July 22nd
Samuel Spier, William Safford [and] John Bruce went to Watervliet, to build their meeting house chimneys [sic], they fnished [sic] them, and returned on the 6th of August.

July 27th:
Joseph Turner came from Watervliet, to help build the aged people’s chimneys.

August 18th
The brethren and sisters, formerly called the 2nd family, moved into their new house, opposite the first family’s house– called the Great House.
**September.**
The workmen finished the new Coalhouse, back of the new blacksmith’s shop.
The aged people, so called, moved into their new house, the last week in this month.

**October 4**<sup>th</sup>
Moses Johnson went to Watervliet, to frame a blacksmith’s shop, for the [Church] there.

**Nov 24**<sup>th</sup>
A cowstable was raised, adjoining the West barn.

**December 17**<sup>th</sup>
A building was raised North of the Meeting house, designed for a sisters’ spinshop. It was afterwards moved off South West of the Great house, right west of where the large brick shop now stands; and for many years was called the West Spinshop. It was lately convicted into a Dairy House, and remains so at this time – 1852.

1792
**August 21**<sup>st</sup>
A building was raised, designed for an Order of young people—long called the Youths’ house—of late years called the 2<sup>nd</sup> house, to this day–1852.

**September 1**<sup>st</sup>
Those called the aged people, raised a small building, for a Trustees’ Office— and for visitors; it is now called the 2 orders’ Second house.

**October 22**<sup>nd</sup>
Those called the Elderly people raised a wash-house this week.

**November 22**<sup>nd</sup>
The Youth moved into their new house this day.

1793
**May 20**<sup>th</sup>
The [Church] began to make large repairs in the Meeting house, took down the great chimneys, raised the house I think 18 inches; underpinned it with white stone, and placed white stone steps, to the four outside doors. There was also much repairing done inside, which I shall not particularize.

**May 20**<sup>th</sup>
The 2<sup>nd</sup> family, as they were called at the East house, raised a blacksmiths’ shop, up the brook, just below where our machine shop now stands.

1795
**March 30**<sup>th</sup>
The brethren, of what was called the second family, in the [Church] began to move the
public horse-shed, the second time; it stood in a strait [sic] line, north [and] south, and after leaving a portion of it for family use, they turned the remainder of it, into an ell bordering on the N. West corner of the Meeting house yard, where it stood, until we had to move it again, to make room for the new Meeting house, in the year 1822. – And here it remained until it was torn down, in the year 1850, and a new one was built – better accommodated for carriages [etc]

August 24th
A little building was raised at the South West of the great house– it was occupied, (the lower left) several years, for a dairy house– The upper part was occupied several years by the Elder Sisters– and for a number of years the lower part has been occupied by the Deaconesses– the upper part for store room: [etc]: —

1796
February.
A kind of temporary mill was fixed by some of the brethren, probably Benjamin Bruce, more particularly then any other one, to saw our firewood by water, for the first time, previous to this it was cut up by axes, and cross-cut saw.

1797
September 27th
Brethren began to make a dam for a triphammer pond, this week.

1798
This fall the brethren took out the former underpinning, at the North end of the first, or great house, and laid a new foundation, more permanent.

1800
This fall was a remarkably dry season, so much so, that the [Church] at one time carried their grain to Stockbridge to grind, and finally there was a general turn out, of the brethren to fetch water to our kitchens, in aqueducts [sic] from springs on the mountain.

1801
June 1st
A beginning was made to move the spin shop that stood north of the Meeting house. It was placed in the back range of buildings, west of what was called the Bakehouse (where the brickshop now stands: – and it is now called the Dairyhouse.)

August
An addition was put to the shop mentioned above, (August 24th. – to accommodate it for cheesemakers. –

[ditto] This fall the 2nd family at the East house add on a wing at the N.E. corner of their house, and enlarge the cellar and cover a part of it with large flat stones.
1802
April 26th
The brethren took down an old barn formerly George Darrow’s; and on the 29th: it was raised again, with some addition, framed by William Safford, [and] others. But in a few years this barn was found to be too small and a large addition was built to it, in the year 1810.
[ditto] This summer an addition was put to the aged people’s dwelling house, which is now, (1852) called the second orders, but proving too small was afterwards taken off, and bro’t down for a shop for the Ministry; but this was too small, and it was moved away and placed east of the East Spins Shop, in 1810. – and a new shop built for the Ministry, which remains there now – 1852. This little old shop that was moved east of the Spins Shop has gone by the name of the Martin Bosc!

Oct 12th
A cart house was raised, North of West Barn, mostly framed out of the old Darrow Barn.

December 13th
The Church move the aged people’s blacksmith’s shop, [and] form it into a building for the use of the poor. It has been much reformed [and] repaired; it still stands a little south of the old Office, or 2nd order’s 2nd house– and is used for the dairy– for the boys to live in, [and] for a sisters’ shop. –

1803
Tuesday, August 23rd
The Church raise the cider house, which was the first ever built in this society for that purpose.

1804
Monday May 28th
An addition was raised to the old north House, for the accommodation of Young Believers and those who minister to them.
We would here remark that previous to this [and] 10 years after, the gathering Order, situated at the North house, were included in the joint interest with the [Church] and applied to the Trustees for their temporal needs, the same as the 1st [and] 2nd Orders now do.

August
The first family or Order built a little brick ash-house, a little West of the shop occupied by the Deaconesses.

1807
April 23rd
The first family raised a wood house, just West of the Great house. The first of the kind built.
June 3rd
Raised a Garden Barn.

March 23rd
The woodhouse spoken of on the last page was built on the site of an old shelter, made with crotches set in the ground, with poles laid on [and] covered with boards [and] slabs, without any siding.

June 3
The Garden barn spoken of was built on what was then the north line of the Garden, where it now stands, and was repaired in 1850 and covered with tin, [and] painted.

April 30th
A wood house was raised at what was then called the Third family now called the 2nd Order.

May 13th An old Beehouse standing a little S.E. of the Spinshop was demolished.

1808
April 19th
A little building, attached to the third family’s house at the South end was drawn down and placed a few feet N.W. from the great house, [and] converted into a shop for the Ministry, who have heretofore occupied two rooms in the great house.

[April] 20th
A new building was raised at the third family in the place of the one moved away yesterday but larger than that [and] better adapted for the use of the office deacons.

May 23rd
The Ministry moved into their new shop.

May 26th
Our old sawmill, the first one built, was torn down to give place for a better one. – The old one being not only too small, but parts of it much rotted out. –

June 2nd
The new sawmill raised – Levi Chauncey foreman.

July 2nd
The Deacons at the Office moved into their new apartments. – See April 20th above.

[July] 14th
A new woodhouse was raised to day, a little S.W. of the second house. William Safford foreman.
August 8th
Two hired men are employed to do a job at painting our better buildings, viz. John Youngs [and] Bostic Squires – they were from Lanesborough. See old Journal Sep 9th: [etc.]

1809
May w. 17th
The Church having suffered much for years in relation to obtaining water for kitchen use [etc] have wooden aqueducts, [sic] which have become rotten [and] caused much affliction [and] expense, have this year come to a conclusion to make earthen pipes, to be laid with cement. Accordingly they have been making preparations to excel a kiln [and] construct machinery [etc] for the purpose and a frame was raised this day, for a temporary building in which to make the pipes. On the 19th of June a beginning was made to mould some pipes. The first kiln full was burned about the 20th of July. Began to lay down the pipes about the last of September. By the 10th of November there were about 250 rods of pipes laid this year. Thus our chief force, as far as could be spared was devoted to this business this year– we made some where about 7000 pipes– and burnt 5 kilns full. It is impossible to arrive at any reliable calculation of the amount of labor and expense in this job, but it was perhaps not far from 6 month’s work for 6 hands, and a teamster, and single team perhaps 2 months, in the course of this year– and perhaps one third that much the next year.

August th. 24
The Old Office, at the third family is being repaired this season – A new roof put on – [and] the frame raised to day.

1810
May tu. 22
An addition is put on to the West end of the west barn, this season for further accommodations for team [and] room for hay, the frame raised to day. – William Safford foreman.

September tu. 4th
A new Shop is built this season for the Ministry– The frame raised to day. William S. Foreman.

November. th 22
The Ministry’s shop has been put forward rapidly. Several hands have been working on it from the family Order– also Jesse Wells [and] Issachar Bates jr from Watervliet have been assisting.– It is now finished, and the Ministry moved in to it this day.

1811
May th. 23
A new building is erected near the Office, this season, for a store– the frame raised to
day, William S. foreman.

s. 25 Some repairs were made this season also, at the third family, (now called Second family,) to one of the shops, for brethren’s use, the additional frame raised to day: This is since called the “Long Shop.” –

November w. 17th
Considerable preparations this season for drawing wire for Card teeth, began to day to draw wire by water.

1812
June 1st
The two buildings, called thee East and West Spinshops were repaired this season: the roofs were steep roofs, [and] the 2 lofts of but little value. The roofs were raised [and] the upper lofts made a proper height– [and] the whole buildings newly covered. The new part of the frame to the East shop was raised to day (June 1st) [and] that of the West shop

July 14th
William S. Henry Markham, Isaac N. Y. [and] Bushnell Fitch workmen. – These two buildings [and] others were painted this season.

October m 5th
An old building, or at least about 20 years old standing on the Mountain, about 80 rods N.E. of the great Pond, [and] Called the Bacon house, where Moses Bacon lived a while, was torn down to day, by a company of Elders, from each family. This frame was moved down [and] set up near the Carding machine, to accommodate a little family there to take care of the carding machine [etc].

1813
July th 8th
A new building is erected this season for a joiners’ and Coopers’ shop– and the frame was raised to day. This building was begun by [William] Safford, but he died on the 12th of April [and] left the work for Henry Markham [and] Isaac Y, and Bushnel [sic] Fitch to accomplish.

1814
June w. 29
An addition was put to the great House this season and the frame raised to day. The diging [sic] was commenced, for the foundation on the 25th of April. See p. 40 – July November

w 9th
A building is erected this fall, to contain carding machinery [etc] – and raised to day– It
is to replace the one that was destroyed by the flood, 28\textsuperscript{th} of August last.

1815

\textbf{June tu 6\textsuperscript{th}}

The Second Orders’ dwelling house was repaired this season, The old gambrel roof righted up [and] an addition put on to the North end. – The frame was raised to day. The work was pressed forward, and accomplished, so that by the 24\textsuperscript{th} of November the family began to move in.

1816

[September]

Some painting of buildings done this season – Se N.B.’s journal [September] 1\textsuperscript{st} – 19\textsuperscript{th} – also [August] 8\textsuperscript{th} p. 167 in this book.

1817

\textbf{th. 24\textsuperscript{th} November}

The first Orders’ wash-house was repaired, or more properly rebuilt this season – the frame raised to day – Isaac Y. [and] Anthony Brewster principal workmen.00

The subject of schooling our children has been agitated considerable of late – and it is concluded to set up a public school, for which considerable preparations are necessary, [and] several hands employed. School furniture, desks [etc] are provided, in the [Church] [and] among the families, and school is commenced on the first of December – See Dec 1\textsuperscript{st} p. 52 – And for a more full account see Isaac Y’s journals of those times. –

1818

\textbf{July tu. 7\textsuperscript{th}}

A new dwelling house is erected at the North House the frame was raised to day – It was built mostly by the Church. Anthony Brewster worked there chief of the season, [and] Isaac Y. worked there about 8 weeks. See N. B.’s J. Nov 13 [and] Dec 30\textsuperscript{th}

\textbf{October s. 3}

A new Hovel is built this fall, at the East barn – 92 ½ x 17 – Raised to day – Isaac foreman.

1819

\textbf{September s 18}

A woodhouse built this fall for the accommodation of the East house kitchen – raised to day – Isaac Y. foreman

\textbf{December th 9\textsuperscript{th}}

An \textit{ice house} is built this fall: – the roof put on today – this is the first thing of the kind we ever had: it stands at the North West Corner of the Joiners’ shop.
1820

September 26th
A Job of work is done this fall at getting out some stone at Hancock, or near there, for gate posts, to set at the sides of our street.-- See N.B.’s J.

December
A kind of saw mill built for sawing small wood, at the old building called the wire shop-- a cross cut saw, similar to the big one, but on a small scale.

1821

June th. 21
A building is erected this season, for a Granary, standing south of the old Blacksmith’s shop-- and about 12 rods North West of the 2nd Orders’ dwelling house; raised to day. July 10th-- Two pair of stone posts set south of the Great house [and] East House. See N.B.’s J. Sep 26– March 27th -- [etc] –

[December] th 20th
The Ministry, Elders and Deacons of the Society came together to consult concerning building a new Meeting house.

m 24th
The Elders [and] Deacons meet again to make arrangements as to how [and] when to build-- And on Christmas evening the 25th: Nicholas Bennet, Amos Bishop and Anthony Brewster began drawing drafts for the work.--

1822

November
Much attention has been turned this year from the first of January, to the building of the Meeting house, getting timber, stone [etc]. A number of hands, from the various families in the society have devoted their time to it The building has been framed in the course of the summer and fall [and] spring of 1823. A new [and] large watercourse has been constructed across the road. The old former meeting house has been moved a few rods north, [and] placed on a good foundation, with a good cellar; the house repaired, and made suitable for the society to meet in it again on the 27th of October.-- Also the foundation for the new meeting H. was commenced to day, Nov 4th-- The rough wall [and] pillars were pretty much built up before winter set in, I then left.-- See N.B.’s J. [January] 5th– 23rd– [February] 28th - [March] 20th -- [April] 22nd – May 11th – June 5th– 24th – [August] 19th – [September] 7th– 10th– 12th – 30th – [October] 3rd– 4th [and] 27th [etc]

1823

June
The new meeting house was raised on the 4th– 5th–[and] 6th int [?]
December
The meeting house has been progressing as fast as it could well be. Besides our own workmen, there have been 6 brethren from Watervliet, part of the time.

w. 17
The Ministry moved from the old M house, on the 17th of this month, into the lower rooms of the Porch to reside for the present.-- See N.B.’s J. April 15th. July 1st– 8th – [August] 28th [September] 30th [etc]

1824
April
Some beginning is made this month, towards erecting a new Stone Grist Mill, for the use of the Society. The walls were built by hired workmen– [and] finished the forepart of September. – Henry Bennet, from Watervliet, is Superintendent of the Mill.

May
The stone steps to the meeting house were put up this month. The banking and leveling round the house, [and] the turfing [etc] was done chiefly in June– and also part of the picket fence made.

June. On the 20th
The Society generally attended meeting in the new Meeting house– some from other parts– See N.B.’s Journal. A Horse shed is built at the grist mil– raised May 12th.
October– The old building, called the Bake-house, was moved on the 7th of this month, from its former position, in the front [and] south of the 2nd house, down West of the 2nd house and north of the Spin-shop. The old roof, being gambrel, or hipped roof, was taken off [and] a flat roof put on.
The building was moved on the 7th of this month [and] the roof was raised on the 31st.

1826
June 13th.
A new brick building was erected this season, for the accommodation of the brethren, in shops. – The brick or mason work was commenced on the 13th

October 21
A new barn was erected this fall, the East side of the road, opposite the Meeting house;
The frame was raised on the 21st, of this Month. – This is to be in connection with an office, designed to be built next year.

1827
April 18th
An old building, formerly called the kitchen, the taylors’ shop– the Shoemaker’s shop, [etc] was torn down to day. It was the first frame building of consequence, built by
Believers, since the gospel opened. – it stood about 4 feet south of the new brick shop, built last year.
May – A beginning is made this month to prepare the foundation of the new Office, opposite to the meeting house, 80 by 40 feet.
September – The brickwork to the new office has been laid up this season, mostly in June [and] July – by one Allen [and] Co. from Schenectady.
fr. 6 The Office roof was singled this week.

1828
May 29th
A wood house, or shed, was built this spring, the frame was raised to day.

June 24th
A lightning rod was put up, on the Second Orders’ house to day, the first thing of the kind here in the [Church].

1829
June 18th
A beginning is made to dig for a foundation for a new building, a few rods above the sawmill, designed for a machine shop. –

July 25th
Said machine shop was raised – It was covered in the course of the fall – [and] some machinery put in, in the winter.

December 21st [etc]
Some brethren went to Washington Mt and built a kind of Cabin on our land there.

1830
May [and] June
The tin roof to the Meeting house that was first put on, did not answer well, being leaky [and] causing much labor to mend it: it was therefore agreed to be best to recover it. Accordingly it was done, in the course of these two months, by hands selected [sic] from the different families in the Society – Isaac N.Y. foreman. –
We experienced a sad disaster, while at this job; on the 28th of June a violent hail storm occurred, and a portion of the old tin, not yet taken off, was exposed to the wind, [and] was blown up – rolled, twisted [and] torn in a terrible manner. It cost us many days labor to get it taken apart, and prepared for use again – and considerable of it was wasted.

1831
March 12th
A commencement is made this month, to repair The first Order’s house – The old woodhouse, that stood west of the said house was moved a few rods south, and fixed up for a kitchen, [and] dining room.
April 20
The brethren and sisters moved out of the house, and located themselves in their shops, here and there as they could best find a place. The sisters occupy the 2nd house.

June 16th and 17th
The frame of the great house raised. Thomas Bowman (a worlding) foreman– the work of repairing the house was mostly done by hirelings, as to the principal part of the mason [and] woodwork– Nicholas B superintended the mason work and Anthony Brewster the woodwork. – The covering of the roof with tin, by Isaac N.Y.
The building was pretty much finished outside in July.

1832
April th. 26
The old woodshed, occupied as a kitchen, was moved back near its former location, [and] fixed with a plank floor, for wood: – the former floor was flat stone.

June tu 19th
A building for the use of drying, storing [and] preparing herbs was built this season– the frame raised to day. The frame was mostly of the old timbers, taken out of the old former great house, last year. Thomas Bowman foreman– Garret L. superintendant. [sic]

s. 23
The 2nd Order repair their old barn this season [and] add considerable to it; the frame raised to day– this is the barn referred to in July 1790– p. 163

September th. 6th
The building of the Great house is so far accomplished that the brethren and sisters generally moved in to their rooms respectively allotted to them.
The kitchen began to be improved about the later part of last October– Some aged br. [and] sis moved into the lower west rooms about the middle of January last– [and] the Deacons [and] deaconesses into the front rooms on the first of February.--

1833
There was not much building done this year, but some trifling repairs– and putting up the new stone steps, [etc] about the great house, has been done.
Note: The Great House, so called, from the first, was originally built 40 by 50 feet, with a Gambrel roof– 2 ½ stories [sic] having a porch at the north end.-- In 1814 there was an addition of 30 feet put on the North end– two stories high: in this last repair the house was made 60 feet wide– [and] three stories high, above the basement.

1834
April th. 10th
The old building, standing West of the Great House, formerly called the Horse shed, being a part of the long shed built for the Meeting house– (see Note A. p. 62) and latterly
used for storing meal, sawdust, chips [etc.] was moved from its station, down the West lane, 6 or 7 rods from the Great house.

June tu 10th
A new Tan house was erected this season, the frame of which was raised to day. This was finished off pretty much in the fall [and] following winter – Henry Bennet foreman.

1835
September th 10
A new saw mill was erected this season, the frame raised to day. Henry Bennet [and] Luther Copley [?] were the principal workmen. They accomplished the matter in the fall and winter so far as to have the use of the mill in the spring.

1836
July w 9th
An addition was put to the South end of our Wash-house this season– the frame raised to day. – Isaac Y. foreman. There was formerly a little old building attached to the south end of the wash-house, which was torn away on the 30 of May last, to make room for this new addition. This used to be called the Old Machine shop– where there was a turning lathe, and various other machinery at various times.

August tu 9
The 2nd Order erect a small building just back of their Wash-house, for various purposes– woodhouse, shop [etc] Raised to day. Benjamin Lyon foreman

September
The Hill, or East family having suffered loss of their mill last winter, and being in low circumstances, are assisted by the other families in this society, to build a new mill this season– [and] even the Canterbury people have assisted

m 26
A number went from the [Church] to help raise said Mill.

December s. 3
A building is built at the tanhouse for storing bark in– it was raised to day. Considerable of a job of painting is done this fall on several of our buildings– see Domestic Journal–

1837
October 12th
A large building is erected this season, next– west of the great house, for the purpose mostly of a woodhouse, and also to accommodate the sisters with shops, partly raised to
day. Isaac Y. foreman.

1838 May
The East house, so called underwent repairing this season, the old gambol roof altered to a straight, flat roof—[and] the rooms in the 2nd loft altered, much for the better.
See Domestic family Journal—May 15th—iq [?]—26th—[etc]

1839
September th 26
A new school house is erected this year. The frame raised to day—Isaac Y. foreman. (see April 29th) The house [and] furniture finished, [and] school commenced in 1840.
Appendix E
Meeting House Receipts

The Society at Canterbury gave in money 300.00
[The Society at] Enfield N.H. [gave in money] 200.00
[The Society at] Hancock [gave in money] 200.00
[The Society] [Church] at Enfield (Conn.) [gave in money] 200.00
[The Society] North Family at Enfield (Conn.) [gave in money] 200.00

The Church at Harv furnished glass for the windows, at what amt. I know not.
Shirley [Church] sent Jonas Nutting, who work here a considerable time, but how long I
am not informed– He started for home [September] 15th
Watervliet Church [and] 2nd Family sent 5 hands here to work,

Wm Bates, Timothy Clement, [and] Grove McDale came down from Watervliet the 9th of
June 1823. [and] returned home 30th [September].
[either Jesse or a short form, possibly for Joseph] [and] Freegift Wells came down from
Watervliet August 25th and returned [September] 30th.

pg (1st)

[sic] out by the Second Family in Money– labour and other properties [? at the end of a
line]
Viz money paid for 725 floor plank [sic] in Albany $116.00
Drawing 9 load [sic] plank [sic] from Albany at 24/[?] $27.00
money expended in Drawing plank [sic] from Albany – 14.50
money expended by 2 Brethren to Albany– 1.75

(14)
1823
[August]
14) for Bradds [?] [and] paint Expences [sic] [etc] (money) 30.65
2 days to Albany 2 horses [and] 1 man 12/ 03.00
7 [Ditto] on the roof by Alexander 4/ 03.50
19) Expences [sic] after the large front [?] stone (money) 01.00
2 Days for 2 yoak [sic] oxen after [Ditto] @ 4/ 02.00
One span horses 1 Day– @ 8/ 01.00
4 Days for 1 man after after [?] stone 02.00
Expences [sic] by J Allen after stone 5/6 00.68

(17)
1823
[December] 6) 2 Days [one?] [yoak] [sic] oxen [Drawing] timber [etc] @ 4/ 01.00  
2 [Days] for one man [Drawing timber] @ 4/ 01.00  
To R Mord [?] for Cutting stone (money) 184.88  
4 Door Butts by A. Bishop [money] 00.25

(19)
1824 Expencis [sic] on the Meeting House
May
18th– Money paid at stone Ledge by Elisha (money) 06.07  
by 24. days Work painting by James Smith at 4/ 12.00  
7. days Work painting by Samual [sic] Spooner at 4/ 03.50  
14 ½ days by a man at 4/ 07.25

[no page number]
1824 Money paid for Meiting [sic] [house –word cramped into edge of page]
April
1 paid for Ceder [sic] posts 37.55  
10 paid for trundles 7.23  
24 paid for Brushes 2.16  
Paid in leather 4.18  
28 paid for Paint 14.37  
May 3 paid for Stone 8.37  
5 44 ft [?] of wire – 2/ 11.00  
paid for Stone 5.25  
June 10th to 30th of lead 10 cts [sic] 3.00  
17 for pullris [?] .38  
July 9 paid for Ceder [sic] posts [for?] paints 54.84  
14.00  
August
20 for iron for Door 2.40  
for rods [and] nails 92.63  
for old pewter [?] .75  
for iron [and] Coal 260.00  
--- 517.97

[under which someone has printed] 518.11
Appendix F

Spirit Message¹

“We had the reading of some sacred writings, from Watervliet, They were from various spirits, viz. Jemima Wilkerson, Sarah of old. Melohezedick, Elijah the prophet [and] John Calvin. Such kind of communications are abundant among Believers now days but not quite so much here at N. Lebanon as some other places.-- N. Lebanon abounds more in the guidance of Believers, pointing out our present duties [etc].

A Sacred writing was this day put up in front of the Meeting house, convenient to be read by the public passersby. It was prepared for that purpose some weeks ago. It was as follows.

“The Word of God to his Holy Son Jesus Christ, the Savior of Men.

“Take this short roll of my Word, go forth to read aloud upon the top of my Holy Mountain, that one of my servants may understand and correctly write the same; to which place I will cause one of my Holy angels, who shall bear thee company, to lead the one whom I have chosen, even in the first watch of the rising sun, to the sacred spot of Ground, where on I will cause my word to be revealed in flames of burning fire.

A Proclamation of the Lord God of Heaven and Earth.

Sent forth by his blessed Son, and revealed in flames of fire, upon his Holy Mountain, for Mortal hand to write.

Bow down your hearts, all ye who dwell in Zion, and humble yourselves before me. O ye worms in mortal clay. All flesh shall wither in my presence, [and] the deceitful worker in Zion shall be consumed by the fire of my burning: for much have I given unto Zion, and much will I require at her hand, Saith the Lord God of Heaven.

For I will have a pure people in the Earth, whose hands are not stained with human blood, nor their souls defiled with sin, and disobedience to the commands of my blessed Son, whom I, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, have twice sent forth to the inhabitants of the Earth, whom I created in my own image, that they might bring forth offerings, pure and holy before my sacred throne.

In tender mercy [and] loving kindness did I send forth my Son, both in his first and second appearance, that they might learn the way and salvation and gain an inheritance to my pure and holy gospel while on earth that would ensure them a peaceable mansion of rest in my holy kingdom, when they have done with things of time.

But O Halen! swasta, vacla, mortal men hath never been ready, from the earliest ages of the world unto the present day, to learn my will, and obey my sacred word thro such means as I have been pleased to sent it forth unto them.

But my sacred words have been trampled under their feet, my law of nature disregarded [and] set at naught, and in the sacred paths of my gospel, which is the law of grace to the soul, their feet have not walked; but in other paths their feet have trodden; and they have shed much innocent blood, [and] other Gods than ME, have their souls

bowed down to worship.

Thus saith the Lord, God of Heaven [and] Earth, my All-seeing eye hath beheld the doings of the children of men, for aged and ages long past, even to the present day, and a cruel, persecuting spirit in all ages of the world, to the present time, hath invariably risen up against my most merciful offers, to persecute, even unto death, those who put their trust in me, and would sooner suffer death in any form, than disobey my righteous commands.

But give ear, O Earth, [and] understand O ye people who dwell in her, the day of my visitation hath begun, saith the Lord, and I will never cease, nor cause my hand of Judgment [sic] to be stayed, until I have met all nations in their own paths. Mercy and judgement [sic] are in my grasp, and my hand of wrath and indignation is hovering over the earth, and my angels are passing to [and] fro, thro every quarter.

And whenever I find a people on earth, saith the Lord, who are ready and prepared to keep the commands of my blessed Son, either in his first or second appearance, and heed this, my present warning unto them, by humbling themselves [and] bringing fruits, meet for repentance, which are humility of soul, peace, love [and] good will to all men, and a conscience void of offence before me their God, and each other, my hand of judgement shall lightly pass them over, and in merciful rays of loving kindness will I cause my blessing to distil [sic] upon them.

But unto such as make light, in this their day of my warning voice, and will not even return to the law of nature, as I commanded the children of Israel, by my servant Moses in ancient days, but pass on, saying within their hearts “There are the words of Mortals, and not of God,” I will surely visit them in my own time and season with sore destruction and desolating judgements, till mountains sink and vallies [sic] rise, and kingdoms in pieces rend; for I will cause peace to depart from the Earth, and an awful gloom of terror shall spread the veil of desolation over her face.

For I am the God of yesterday, to day, and forever, and my spirit shall not always strive with mortal man to no purpose, but they shall hear my word in different parts of the earth, sent forth thro’ the mouths of babes and sucklings, and the tongues of the dumb shall be loosed, to warn the people to turn from the error of their doings, and repent before the Lord their God, that his rolling judgements may sweep them not from the face of the earth.

And awful signs shall appear in the firmament of Heaven, that shall cause the heart of men to faint, and his strength shall fail, because of the just judgements which my Almighty hand hath sent forth upon the Earth; for she groaneth beneath the present weight of sin and wickedness, and crieth [?] unto one for vengeance, to recompense the inhabitants thereof, who by their own disobedience have bro’t this curse upon her.

Therefore have I, the God of Heaven, in mercy and loving kindness seen fit to reveal, in these last days, my word [and] will, unto my chosen witnesses; and this short roll of my word, saith the Lord of Hosts, I command my witnesses to put up in the yard of my Holy Sanctuary, that all such of the children of men as may pass this street on the side of my holy Mountain, may read and understand the same.

But touch it not, saith the Lord of Hosts, for I have placed four of my Holy Angels to guard my sacred word, and let him that readeth understand, and judge not my
word, judge not my work, for my doings are marvelous in the sight of men, and who can comprehend my ways? saith the Great I AM.

I have commanded my chosen people, who dwell upon this mount, to bow down in low humility before me, and separate themselves more from the children of this world, and to worship me the coming season in a retired situation, humbly supplicating the mercy of the Lord their God, both for themselves and the rest of the inhabitants of the Earth.

Therefore trouble not my chosen ones, for I have called them, saith the Lord, and they shall not appear in pomp and splendor, but they shall be clothed in meekness and humility of soul, clad in the Spirit of the Lamb and the garment of the Savior: for my people are inoffensive, and will sooner suffer, even unto death, than to resist unto blood. Therefore, in blessing I will bless, and in troubling I will trouble, saith the Lord of Hosts. Dated New Lebanon, May 4th: 1842.
Appendix G

Excerpts from:
“A Memorandum of letters sent to and received from our friends in different parts. Continuing from a former memorandum ending with the year 1821.”

P 10
December [1827]
23. Write to Canterbury Ministry about rejecting the comon use of spiritous liquors.
January 1828
13. Write from Watervliet to the Elders at New Lebanon on the subject.
20. Write from [ditto] to [ditto].
22. Write from [ditto] to Port bay Elders on the same subject.
23. Write to Harvard Ministry from [ditto] on the same subject.
24. Write from [ditto] to Alfred Ministry on the same subject.

P 11
December [1828]

P 12
August [1829]
31. [etc.] Write 3 lengthy letters to E. Solomon and the Elders at Union Village. Also write 2 Copies of the Circular Epistle about . . . same time.

P 18
1834
April 3 I finish nearly 26 pages for Comstock in Hartford Con. about persecutions in Ohio.

June 14. Rufus B. wrote in a Steam Boat on Lake Erie, to Ministry Watervliet.

P 28
March 6 [1838] I wrote lengthy to the Ministry at Union Village. Sent one of Ann Mariah’s Visions concernin a great move in the spiritual world. The whole was on a large sheet of post-paper.

P 29
[September] 24 [1838] I wrote to Ann Hays in NY concerning the health and contentment of her 3 children.

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1Ministry (New Lebanon). “A Memorandum of letters sent to and received from our friends in different parts. Continuing from a former memorandum ending with the year 1821.”Letters - New Lebanon (1830-1834). Manuscript: OCICWHi IV A 36.
[April] 19 [1839] I wrote to the Ministry at Canterbury. Sent them 2 messages and 2 anthems. One message was from a Book given to the Ministry, the other from a book given to the Elders Entitled Look out. A Sure Promise and Father William’s Caution.

22. Wrote to the Ministry at Harvard, sent them one of the messages above mentioned ie. the one from the Ministry’s Book A Sure Promise and Father William’s Caution.

30. Wrote lengthy to Union Village Ministry to meet them at North Union. Sent the message [and] anthems next above mentioned. Also the Vision concerning Thomas Wells sent and the late trust law.


Jan 30. Wrote 2 full sheets to the Ministry at Groveland. Sent the message from Mother Ann through Elisha B. and one from the Prophet Daniel [and] one from Mother Ann concerning the education of youth [and] children.

March 10. Wrote 2 ½ sheets to the Ministry in N. Hampshire mostly messages from the Spiritual world. One concerning the education of youth [and] children, [and] the other concerning the recording of Spiritual messages [etc. etc.]

11. Wrote to Harvard Ministry, sent 3 sheets. Sent 2 messages – one concerning the Education of children, and another concerning the gift to Record the Sacred gifts in the late manifestation.

[ditto] We sent the latter message to the Ministry at Groveland, [and] also some other messages given for them [and] their people, by J. Wood who started to day about 11 o’clock

March 16. Wrote to the Ministry of Union Village. Sent between 5 [and] 6 sheets finely written—sent the interpretation of the 6 square sheet [and] what was connected therewith. Also the lengthy Communication concerning the duty of Believers in gathering the supernatural gifts which have been given them for 3 or 4 years past, [and] Recording them.

Apl. 19. Wrote to the Ministry at Union Village. Sent 2 sheets. Sent a copy of a Roll to the Ministry from Holy Mother Wisdom [and] a part of another from Her about her intended visit in every Society. Also a communication from Father James relative to Inspired Instruments [and] Messages. We keep no Copy of the above.

23d. Wrote to Watervliet 2 sheets. Sent a Copy of Roll from Holy Mother Wisdom [etc]
24. Wrote the like to the Ministry at Hancock.

P 36-37
6 of May Wrote to the Ministry at Groveland, also sent them a message from Holy Mother Wisdom, both by Jonathan Wood.

P 37
20th Wrote to Harvard Ministry lengthy Letter. Also sent them Holy Mother Wisdom’s Roll, but kept no Copy.

20th [sic] Wrote about the same in length and substance to the Ministry at New Hampshire [and] preserved a copy of the latter.

Sept. 25 Wrote 2 letters to the Ministry in New Hampshire, also a communication from the Prophet Daniel, dated June 24th 1841, and 2 little Books of Divine Inspiration concerning the use of strong drinks, swine’s flesh and tobacco, Inst. Philemon S and Benjamin G.
Appendix H
Circular¹

New Lebanon Columbia Co. N.Y. Oct 10th 1860
Dearly beloved Gospel Relations

It is with feelings of mortification and tribulation that we feel called upon to address you on the present occasion.

Perhaps you are aware that some families, in some societies of Believers, have suffered themselves to run in debt to the world, entirely contrary to the constitution of our society, in all its several branches, and contrary to the precepts and practice of those believers who have built upon the true gospel foundation established by the first founders of our order, whose motto, instruction and life testimony was, “Owe no more anything but love and good will.”

But, within a few years past, some trustees, in their strong desire to promote what they supposed to be the true interests of the society, or family in which they dwell, have borrowed money of the world, for different purposes, by the knowledge, consent and union of the leading authorities of such families and societies, and, in some cases, without such union and consent, and even without the knowledge of the leading authorities thereof so that it may be truly said of some societies they have greatly strayed from the pure gospel path of righteousness concerning these things.

Unfortunately, the little branch, the church of the society of New Gloucester, in the state of Maine, having, a few years since, built a nice grist and flouring mill, on a small scale, and, with the hope [and] belief that the church might be benefitted by flouring wheat, the trustees thereof borrowed money of banks, and individuals in Maine, to considerable amounts, all of which, with the exception of two thousand dollars, which was borrowed of believers, was obtained without the union and knowledge of the leading authorities thereof.

With this borrowed capital, what was purchased in Chicago at different times, and shipped to their mill, and floured for the eastern market, thinking for a time, they were making money, by the operation. But, in the mean time, when the knowledge of these great purchases of grain came to the Ministry and Elders of the society, consultations were held among them to decide what was the most prudent course, to liquidate the debts; and, at that time, it was judged most advisable, by the authorities in Maine and New Hampshire, to manufacture all the grain into flour, sell out, and close the business, believing that no money would be lost in the operation, and not much would be gained.

The result was, a great loss. To extricate themselves from this dilemma, one of the members employed in the mill, without union and permission, and without the knowledge of leading authorities in that society and contrary to the counsel and advice of the Ministry at New Lebanon, borrowed of banks more money, to buy more grain, and carry on other operations for making money, with still less success. The result was, the

contraction of debts, amounting, on the 1st of January 1860, to $14,000.00. Previous to
these last transactions, the society had assumed the debts before contracted.

That poor little afflicted family, of about fifty people, who was, [word obscured] free from debt, with a good mill, and good run of custom, and in good circumstances to live, are now struggling under this heavy load. They have, the summer past, reduced the total debt to $11,000.00 cash. Of which, they now owe the world $8,000.00 for which, they have given notes due in four months.

With this great load upon them, it is believed, by all who are conversant with their real condition, they never can rise, and continue to support themselves; they have no real estate, or other property to much amount they can dispose of to pay the debt without reducing the homestead to such limits that it will not be practicable to maintain the organization of society.

The family of New Gloucester, are as innocent of any part in, or knowledge of those transactions of business which produced this enormous involvement, as persons in any other society or family, they knew nothing of it, until about one year since, in which time they have suffered in their feelings very much indeed.

Under these circumstances, the question is, what ought the main body of Believers to do relative to the case? Must the possessions of the society be sold to [word unclear] the debt, and the family and society be broken up, which would unavoidably, be the result of such an operation, and thus one of the branches of Zion become exterminated and its name cut off from Israel, as a lasting testimony of the sorrowful fruits of disobedience to the gospel law, which is, that no person or persons, transacting business for any portion of Zion, may, on [words obscured] run in debt to the world!!!

Or, will every part of Zion which has been more fortunate, lend a share of aid, to [word unclear] a portion of this great debt to the world, and thus enable the family in New Gloucester to continue a name and a place in Israel.

They are all struggling, with their whole strength, to earn all they can, but, their principal dwelling is very old, and quite unfit for a dwelling, for decent people, consequently, their loss is more severely felt.

Dearly beloved Brethren and Sisters, the subscribers, the Ministry of New Lebanon, having recently received the bishopric in Maine under their more immediate charge, (it having been under the superintendence of the Ministry of Canterbury for a period of about thirty years) our tribulation is very great on their account, and, with this, in addition to the many very heavy burdens weighing upon us, we can but solied the assistance and support of all our brethren of the household of faith.

There is one important feature, relative to the distressed and indebted family at New Gloucester, when compared with the church at Shirley, and some other families among Believers, who are largely, and even more largely in debt to the world than this, which renders it a subject of preeminent dominuscracion, namely. In all of these families there is some real estate in houses, mills, [etc etc], which is the value received for the borrowed capital expended; but, in the case of the Gloucester family, the whole amount of the debt is [word unclear] loss, as much, and as really so, as to the property were consumed by fire, or flood.

We propose, for the whole Zion on earth to be taxed a little, to pay enough of this
Debt to enable the society to live, and get strength, gradually to rise out of their present distressed condition, and suggest the sum of $4,000.00 to be raised and forwarded to New Gloucester, before the 1st of January 1861, if practicable, [and], if not, as soon thereafter as consistent. The amount proportioned to each society to raise, as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Society</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Lebanon</td>
<td>$600.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watervliet, N.Y.</td>
<td>380.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groveland</td>
<td>96.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hancock</td>
<td>240.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyringham</td>
<td>84.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enfield Ct</td>
<td>240.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvard</td>
<td>120.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirley</td>
<td>30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canterbury</td>
<td>365.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enfield N.H.</td>
<td>$365.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Village</td>
<td>420.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitewater</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Union</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant Hill</td>
<td>360.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Union</td>
<td>360.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watervliet, O</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$4000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above sum is supposed to be a little less than one dollar per person, were it equally divided among members, but, lead families for acquiring property, and other circumstances, such as some families, in some societies, being so much in debt as to be unable to render much if any assistance [words unclear], there the several sums a little out of proportion, when indeed [word unclear] this standard. And, our apportionment may not be positively just [and] equal, but, it is the best we can do, with our knowledge of circumstance; and, as the several sums are not very large, should such a cause be that best, perhaps they can be raised.

By reference to Br David Parker’s Circular, it will be seen he proposes to raise $5,000.00 in four annual instalments. By calculation, you will observe that the interest due on the balance of the $5,000.00 held in [word faded] from year to year, after the first payment, amounts, in four years at 0.6 percent to $450.00 leaving a sum of $550.00 in favor of the Brethren at Gloucester at the termination of the four years, by the plan proposed by Br David, but, the bank being impatient of delay, is pressing for payment, and, unless it is forthcoming when notes are due, will probably attach property, and expose to sheriff sale, to raise the money: therefore, we would prefer, the immediate raising of $4,000.00 if practicable to do so.

Should our gospel friends, in all parts of Zion, feel to open their arms of charity, and extend some assistance on the present trying occasion, agreeably to the foregoing propositions, or, in some manner and measure as seemeth to their right, we shall be truly thankful.

We must earnestly request, that the present circumstances and occasion, united to other repeated calls of a similar nature, which have sorely taxed the generous brethren and sisters of the household of faith within a few years past, may teach a lesson to the whole Zion of God, never to be forgotten. Namely

That no business agent, in the transaction of business for the people of God, in any capacity, great or small, is authorized or how any permission of the United Society of Believers, whose property is all consecrated to the service of God, to virtually mortgage any portion thereof, great or small, to the world; whether it be real or personal estate, by giving a note, or notes, for value received, or, in any manner, running absolutely in debt to the world.
Admonished by the very sorrowful and trying consequences of such a practice, very many times repeated of late in different parts of Zion, which brings great loss, temporal, social, and spiritual, on the whole Zion of God and great tribulation upon the faithful, and which is in open violation of our covenantary obligations, requiring every covenant member to be free from all involvements with the world, We feel bound in duty, to enjoin it upon all Believers, as an abiding order to be kept thro out all generations, in every family, and by every individual doing business in behalf of, and for, the people of God. that

No Believer shall give a note, or notes, in payment for value received, on any occasion, or, in any manner run in debt to the world, by giving promisory security for value received, after payment becomes due, according to the stipulated terms of sale, when the bargain is first made

We earnestly solicit an early reply to the foregoing from the Ministry of each bishopric. We desire this Circular to be read to the covenant members of you society, that all may be instructed that Zion is liable illimitable sufferings if her inmates, one and all, do not sacredly regard the principles which forbid her inhabitants to become bondservants to the children of this world: for, with no propriety can these talents [and] possessions that have been consecrated to God, under a solemn vow [word faded], be withdrawn and tendered to the world.

So much love to all our precious gospel friends in every part of Zion, we close Ministry of New Lebanon